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THE  
TRIBULATIONS OF A BARONET

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SIR WILLIAM EDEN, BARONET

(From a drawing by Prince Paul Troubetzkoy)

*The*  
TRIBULATIONS  
*of*  
A BARONET

*by*  
TIMOTHY EDEN

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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TO ALL THOSE

WHO

ARE INTERESTED RATHER IN CHARACTER THAN IN NAMES  
IN FAILURE THAN IN SUCCESS  
IN BEAUTY THAN IN PROGRESS

I DEDICATE THIS SKETCH

OF ONE WHO FOUGHT AGAINST HIS AGE  
A BITTER FIGHT

FOR

TRUTH AND BEAUTY



“WHAT matter if his sufferings were for the most part imaginary? They were none the less real to him. He lived in a world of imagination, and by the gift of genius, unfortunate to its proprietor, has known how ‘to make madness beautiful in the eyes of others’.”



THE quotations at the heads of chapters and elsewhere throughout the book are taken, unless otherwise indicated, from the letters of Sir William Eden.

My thanks are due, in the first place, to those who, by kindly lending me letters, have made possible the compilation of this memoir.

My thanks are further due to the Proprietors and Editor of *The Saturday Review* for permission to reproduce the article on "Gardens without Flowers" and, with them, to Mr. C. D. Medley also, for the extracts quoted from the article by George Moore; to Prince Paul Troubetzkoy and Mr. Max Beerbohm for their respective drawings; and to Messieurs Durand-Ruel et Cie for allowing me to include the photograph of the picture by Degas.

TIMOTHY EDEN



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## PROLOGUE

### I. UNDER THE MOON

ON the brow of a hill a long, low, porticoed house stood empty in the moonlight. A park, crossed by a silver chain of ponds and splashed here and there with inky shadows on its grey grass, swept up to a sunk fence where a close-cropped lawn fell away from the house to meet it. Behind the dull ochre mass of the building a further hill stretched upwards yet to a crest of wind-torn beeches. But even those high distant beeches this night were still, while the nearest branches, denticulated across the picture, seemed as clear-cut, as unsusceptible to any motion of the air, as the steel artificialities of a toy landscape. The only sounds audible to the spectator who sat his horse under a fringe of trees at the low end of the park were the random hoots of an owl, the heavy sighs of cattle as they stirred in the rough grass, and the champing of his horse's bit.

For a long time the man sat motionless,

drinking in the scene. Too rare to-day, it was common enough then, in the year 1844. There were hundreds of English houses not unlike this one, dotted up and down the country, sleeping this very night as this was sleeping, girdled with trees, under the light of a harvest moon. There was little here to move an Englishman in those days; no clutch at the heart for the fear that presently, under the encroachment of civilisation and progress, it would be gone. Such a scene was only worth a casual glance and the passing thought that to-morrow it would be a fine day. But the man beneath the trees was deeply moved. He had never before seen this particular house, these particular beeches and waters, and to-night they were all his. Everything was his, so far as his eyes could see.

William Eden was no longer a very young man. His father, a man of benevolent disposition and scholarly mind, author of a large and standard work,<sup>1</sup> had died when William was a baby, and it was now many years since the death of his elder brother in action at the age of sixteen had given him one baronetcy and made him

<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederick Morton Eden, *State of the Poor*.

heir-presumptive to another. Those years he had employed chiefly in travelling, in adding to his considerable knowledge of the classics proficiency in an unusual number of modern languages, and in cultivating his natural taste for the fine arts, both in the examination and purchase of pictures in Italy and Spain and in the practice of sketching in pencil and in water-colours. Already, at the age of eleven, he was busy with his sketch-book. "In the midst of the snow", he noted in his diary, with a trim precision which to-day seems strangely above his years—"In the midst of the snow we took a view of the church which cut a very good figure indeed."

This elegant church was "taken" during a visit to Paris which, in company with his uncle, he paid in December 1814, during his holidays from school. It was no idle visit. The boy was taken to see all the sights of the town, and in the evenings he went regularly to the theatres, of which the *Ombres Chinoises* entertained him most, "it having so great a variety of performances". Moreover "it is much cheaper than Mr. Pierre's and it has mechanising performance besides a great many other things are shown better and with longer continuance".

During the same visit he went out to see "the procession of the translation of the *Bones* of Louis XVIth and Maria Antoinette from some d'unjon where they were buried to Saint Denis's, but we were very much disappointed as it was passed and we saw but two of the carriages and two or three regiments of horse and foot. It was I hear from all accounts no great things, it being nothing to compare to Lord Nelson's. For my part I do not think it was better than what an English nobleman's is in England, except the troops."

At the conclusion of this trip he visited the dentist. "My uncle had the *kindness* as to have the two hindermost grinders pulled out which was not a very pleasant operation." Without gas or local anaesthetic it could not have been pleasant, certainly, but what boy of eleven years to-day would record it so gratefully and so gracefully!

The taste for travelling thus cultivated in him in his childish days found full expression in early manhood when he visited the West Indies and both Americas, as well as France, Italy, Spain, Austria and the Near East. The first baronetcy, as it brought with it neither land nor responsibilities, permitted this employment of his time,

and Eden was careful to make full use of it, continuing as heretofore his diligent notes on all whom he met and all that he observed. In Laxenburg, a country palace of the Emperor of Austria, he saw the young Napoleon passing under the trees of the garden to dine with the emperor at half-past one o'clock. "Young Nap", he wrote, "is a very gay cheerful looking lad about 5 foot 7 inches high. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat with white trowsers. His mother, a full handsome looking woman. . . . The Emperor is said to be extremely fond of his grandson, who lives constantly with him and is very much liked by the whole court for his spirited and mirthful disposition." This gives a somewhat different picture from that of the melancholy "Aiglon" presented to us by Monsieur Edmond Rostand!

On board a *trabaccolo*, a small vessel of about seventy tons, he sailed from Ancona to Corfu, hearing on his way from one of the crew—"a more filthy bad looking character I never saw"—the story, related *con amore*, of how he knocked out the brains of a Turkish pirate with an axe. A little later we read: "Tricoupi was on board. He had known Ld. Byron very well, both during

his first visit to Greece and at Missolonghi, and saw him constantly during his last melancholy illness. He told me that he heard him say to Mavrocordato, conversing on the subject of his separation from his wife: *elle était trop chaste pour moi.*"

Much of this time Eden spent on board of a British frigate, hunting for Lord Cochrane (afterwards Lord Dundonald), who was expected to come to the assistance of the Greeks, then engaged in their fight for independence. But ever his chief delight was in the scenery, in the lights and shadows which fell on the Albanian mountains, in the journey which he went on horseback between Smyrna and Constantinople, over hills covered with beautiful oak woods, and in the olive groves of Corfu "appearing to great advantage in the light of the young moon".

In Naples his discernment made him the proprietor, for a trifling sum of money, of a small picture which is now one of the rarities of the National Gallery,<sup>1</sup> and in Spain he made the acquaintance, which later developed into friend-

<sup>1</sup> "An Instrument Dealer at his Booth in the Open Air", by Carel Fabritius.

ship, of Richard Ford, “Spanish Ford”, who dedicated to him his entertaining and erudite *Handbook for Spain*—a work too little known to-day, for it is written in a superb style and has been praised by such high authorities as Prescott, Washington Irving, Lockhart and George Borrow. The story is related that many years later Ford paid a visit to his old friend in the north of England, when Eden took him to see some neighbours who lived in a house called Rokeby, immortalised by Sir Walter Scott. On their way Ford happened to speak of a Velasquez which he was anxious to trace. He knew that it had been sold out of Spain but had no idea what had since become of it. On entering the drawing-room, in the act of greeting his host, he suddenly stopped and, pointing to the picture over the mantelpiece, exclaimed: “By Gad! There it is!” This was the famous Rokeby Venus which is now in the National Gallery.

But now Eden’s adventurous and travelling days were over. This night, as a last tribute to romance, he had ridden over alone from a friend’s house to view his new property for the first time by the light of the moon. To-morrow he would

take official possession. As he sat there on his horse, a small, spare man of forty-one, not much given to sentiment, he smiled somewhat drily at himself before, with all seriousness, he resolved, God being his helper, conscientiously to fulfil all the duties appertaining to his estate. At his age, apart from the fact that he was of a prudent disposition, there was no danger of his scattering the wealth which was now his. He would not only be a rich man but a careful one. He was newly married and he would have children, many children, for this was his duty to his country; but however many, each child would be not only properly but generously provided for at his death. And to this end he determined to administer his property with a rigid economy, to assist the poor and needy within reason, but to permit no wanton waste in his establishment. For the rest, he would conduct such affairs of the county as came within his province to the best of his ability; he would live on friendly terms with his neighbours, his tenants and his employees; he would attend Divine Service with his family regularly every Sunday, and he would do all in his power to counteract the influence, which he believed to be growing

in this part of the world, of those damned pernicious Radicals.

So he looked forward to a well-ordered life, to a position of honour, to the respect of the county, and to such decent, inexpensive pleasures as he would permit himself. But perhaps, amongst his hopes and reasonable anticipations, there lurked a small and mischievous regret for the life which he would lead no more. Perhaps for ten steady glances forward, he cast one lingering look behind. Perhaps the moonlight sentimentalised him for the last time, forced, in spite of himself, a little sigh from him and brought back fond remembrances of hot nights at Seville, of the Greek girl spied between the chinks of a green shutter at Zante, and of the stroll which he took as a young man on the high road from Bologna to Ancona, “enjoying the delightfully soft air and the beauty of an Italian moon”.

## II. THE GRASS WITHERETH

So William Eden lived his sober life as he had planned it, and had children and saved money for his children. But suddenly great trouble and sorrow came to him. One after another his

children died. Within the space of a few years he lost two sons, including his heir, and four little girls—Elfrida, Rose, Blanche and Caroline. The portraits of the girls still smile happily from the walls of their old home. They are extremely pretty children, with ringlets framing their pink cheeks, and all were painted out of doors, in little black shiny shoes, white socks, billowy skirts and large floppy hats. Elfrida, the eldest, sits on the ground beneath a large tree, her hands clasped demurely in her lap; Blanche, the smallest and the pudgiest, clutches a large bunch of blue grapes; Helen, the darkest, who lived to grow up and marry, trips across the grass with a bird in her fist and a long curling feather in her hat; Rose and Caroline are playing with a fawn.

Their father built a chapel for them in the grounds: no terrible affair of Victorian gothic, marble and stained glass, such as might be supposed, considering the dangerous date, but a simple classical building of sandstone with a green copper dome. His taste was always restrained and correct. "*Ego sum pastor bonus*" he caused to be inscribed upon the lintel, "*et agnosco oves meas*"; while, above a child shepherd with his crook, a pelican, so small as scarcely to

be distinguishable, tears vainly at its breast in paternal piety.

On July 24th, 1868, he wrote in his diary: "During the night the remains of our six dear children were removed from St. Helen's and Merrington and safely placed in the vault of the chapel, where at eleven I saw them for the last time. May my bones rest by their bones and may God grant that my spirit may meet theirs in everlasting Life."

He lived for five years after this, still conscientiously performing his duties. Every afternoon at half-past two o'clock he mounted his grey pony and rode round the estate. He entertained his neighbours, though sparingly, subscribed generously to the restoration of his parish church, and went into the local town "to see about this accursed election business". His favourite pastime was still to read Latin, Greek and Italian in the library, a big room lined from floor to ceiling with dark, vaguely-smelling old books. By the light of a solitary candle we may here picture him, his legs wrapped in a rug—for a fire lit for one person, even though he were the master of the house, would have seemed to him an improper extravagance. He is engrossed in the

campaigns of Julius Caesar, a favourite author, read again and again, or he smiles his odd, dry smile over the lighter pages of an Italian *novella*. From time to time he lays his book on his lap and unwittingly listens, but no sound of scampering feet breaks into his silence and his solitude, and he picks up his book again and applies himself with renewed concentration.

There were still children left to him—and enough for most people in these days!—three boys and two girls, as well as his wife. But there was no longer levity in the house. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth”, he had written over the tombs of his children. Too much grass had withered, too many flowers had faded, and the heart had gone out of the gardener who had tended them. Always inclined to be stern, he became sterner still. He grew irritable. “Zounds, woman!” he would exclaim, more frequently than usual now, exasperated with the stupidity of his wife, a beautiful, God-fearing but stiff and narrow-minded woman. He was troubled, too, about the boys. The youngest was sickly, and William, now the eldest and in the army, was very hot-tempered and apt to be rude to his mother whenever he was at home. This was

natural, but it could not be permitted. Moreover the boy had become engaged to a quite impossible girl—impossible, that is, in those days, for she would be more than welcome for her money in these—but “That woman”, said his father sternly, “shall never sit in your mother’s chair”, and the engagement was broken. Altogether “dear Willy” was the source of much anxiety.

In 1873 the old man died, suddenly, while away from home. He would doubtless have preferred to die in his own house, but he could not have been sorry to have reached the end of his road and to rest by the side of his six dear children.

He was succeeded by his second son but the eldest surviving, William Eden, who is the subject of this memoir.

(End of Prologue)

## IN THE SADDLE

“Ye gods, what a funk I have been in, out hunting!  
But no one has known it, not even my valet.”

THE young man who now succeeded to carefully collected riches and a parsimoniously controlled estate was not only in many respects very different from his father, but different also from the wild, solitary and indignant martyr he was destined to become. It is a far cry from William Eden, cornet in the 8th Hussars, to a fierce old baronet overpowering his friends and terrifying his family, finding consolation from life in the genius of his own water-colours, shaking his stick at the Victoria Memorial, and falling in love with the washerwomen of Degas. But the distance is more apparent than real. In the young subaltern who rode his own horse to victory at the Curragh, who was sent for and congratulated by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland after a run with the Ward Union Staghounds, there were already present the seeds of the love of beauty,

the genesis of that unfailing source of devilish discontent. And in the old man who planned and plotted the purples of his garden, who hated smoking and drinking and the uproarious, insensitive ways of sportsmen, there lingered yet an admiration for courage, a pride in past achievement, a comfort in the thought that he could still knock his enemies down, and almost as much delight in the paces of a horse or the physical perfection of a boxer as in the sombre magnificence of a Byzantine cathedral or the lines of a leafless tree.

For this reason, and because this little memoir is no more than a sketch, unsuited to the detailed recording of the gradual expansions of growth, the character of William Eden may here be most suitably given at once and *en bloc*, as he more or less was in his youth, as he was destined fully to become, as even in old age he never entirely ceased to be. The reader will simply bear in mind that while the love of art and the love of sport were coexistent and continual in his nature, with advancing years and intensified sensibility the delight in all things beautiful, the joy in artistic achievement, the raging sorrow for artistic decay, tended increasingly to prevail.

William Eden was an extraordinary man. If he had not been, there would be no excuse for this memoir, for he was not famous. Save for one tiresome and rather ridiculous episode when his name was dragged into the limelight through his association with a celebrated artist—an episode which is described at length in the next chapter—he would never have been heard of by the public at all; and even that story is now forgotten. But it is not on the grounds of his quarrel with Whistler that any justification for this sketch can be attempted. It can be justified only by the personality of the subject, by his apparent failure rather than by his obvious achievements, by what he was and not by what he did. Here was a man who, with every encouragement from nature and from circumstance, should surely have set his mark upon the world. And yet he failed to do so. The reasons for this defeat should become evident in the course of these pages, but the point requiring emphasis here is that the failure of such a man—a man of infinite variety and outstanding originality, apparently ready made to command, to dominate and to succeed—should be at least as interesting and as instructive as the successes

of more limited and more commonplace personalities. Biographies of these abound. We are constantly regaled nowadays with the stories and memoirs of small men hitting bull's-eyes. Let us, for a change, consider him who shoots a splendid arrow wildly at the skies. Let us try and follow its flight for a moment, through that cloud, athwart that gleam of sunlight, ere it plunges, beautiful and ineffectual, out of sight, to be lost in the sea for ever. Ineffectual perhaps, but only "perhaps", and the flight surely is more rare and yet more natural, more true to feathers, than a placid progress from a gloved controlling hand to a stuffed target.

As a clue to the character which we are now about to consider, three brief extracts may be given from letters written during Eden's early years. On comparison with those quoted towards the end of this book, it will be seen that the mind which inspired them, in spite of a development notably in the direction of increased bitterness, was essentially the same.

"I hope before you leave", he writes, shortly after his marriage, to his young brother-in-law, "to have taught you how to drive a team, how

to shoot, how to box, how to paint, and how to ride across a country!" And again, referring to this same "new brother", he says: "His admiration for me will doubtless vanish when, as he grows older, he discovers how shallow everything is and that 'all is vanity, saith the preacher'. I myself *in* myself believe myself nothing but a fraud! I have *just missed* being able to do most things well and succeed only in a failure at everything. However, that is known only, or chiefly, by myself!"

The third letter refers to his water-colours.

"It was very gratifying to get your letter of congrats. *re* the article in the *Saturday Review*. Yes, George Moore wrote it. It's a pity he calls the country Circassia, but to anyone who has not been, both are equally vague. On the whole it is very satisfactory, and such praise from such a man in such a paper is more than Green's plodding and often hopeless pupil ever dreamed of! I *know* too I can do better, but I am very uncertain, and it's curious how the spirit comes to one at times and the eagerness to put it down is like catching at a memory almost that may escape."

In these three letters, all written in the earlier

phases of his development, we see already the three chief facets of his character—love of art, love of sport, and disillusionment.

But in his assertion that he had missed doing everything well, Eden was less than fair to himself. On the contrary, everything which he did he did not only well but excellently. As a horseman, he was second to none in the north country. When in form out shooting—which, however, was not always—there could be no prettier shot to watch, none more graceful, quick or clean. He was an expert whip and an amateur boxer of the first rank, a pupil of the celebrated Bat Mullens. And at the same time the criticisms of his water-colours are evidence for those who have not seen his work that he was no mere sportsman with a facility for dabbling in his spare time, with a taste for drawing his own hunters and a sincere admiration for the art of Landseer. It was not because he missed doing everything well that he failed, but precisely because he could and did do everything well, and because a body built for power and grace in the field was combined with an intelligent and over-exitable brain, over-sensitive, too eager for suffering, too susceptible to beauty, too easily unbalanced by opposition and

obstruction, by noise and ugliness. The contradictions and conflicts in his tastes and character which necessarily resulted from this combination are almost sufficient to account for his failure before the world. But it is these very contradictions which make him peculiarly interesting and set him apart as one of the most clearly defined individuals of his time, impossible to classify with any type.

He was a sportsman and a lover of the country; but the ordinary delights of a sportsman and a lover of the country—dogs, children, sporting pictures and reminiscences, pipes, whisky, sunsets, lawn-tennis and the merriment of spring—were all obnoxious to him.

He was an artist; but the usual attributes of an artist—slovenly clothes, dirt, unpunctuality, unreliability, the smell of oils and tobacco, happy-go-luckiness, discomfort and poverty—were strange and offensive to his nature.

He was wise and far-seeing in public affairs, with a dislike for compromises and half-truths and a remarkable knack for divesting a subject of its frills and furbelows and coming straight to the point; but the service which with these qualities he might have rendered to his country

was nullified by his contempt for humanity, his ridicule of “public-mindedness”, and his fatalistic outlook on life.

He loathed jacks-in-office and bureaucracy, bowler-hatted Labour Members and Nonconformists; but he fought bitterly with official Conservatism, damned rich manufacturers, and derided the pretensions of birth. He preferred, perhaps, before all others, the poorer, more natural and less falsely educated classes. In return, of all the people whom he met and fascinated—artists, pugilists, hunting men and fashionable women—none appreciated him more or understood him better than the workmen on his estate.

He was irreligious and a violent and sincere scoffer of angels and archangels and all the hierarchy of heaven, without belief in the continuity of life, without hope beyond the grave; but his atheism was based, not on a cold materialism, but on a warm-hearted indignation with the cruelties and injustice of existence and the conviction that no just, all-powerful and all-merciful God could be responsible for the miseries of the world. If God existed, then he hated Him for His cruelty. But he could not believe that He did

exist. And yet? . . . There lingered a doubt. It would be poor sport baiting and abusing the Almighty, if there were no Almighty to bait. In his water-colours he betrayed that his mind was full of spiritual pain and perplexity.

He was a true and loyal friend, a shrewd adviser with a knowledge of the world, a man largely capable of sympathy and love, and sadly needing it; but his uncontrolled rages terrified and drove away an approaching friendship as a bird is scared to a distant branch. His intolerance of the opinions of others not only hurt their natural vanity but made any reasonable discussion impossible. His personal and direct rudeness was offensive to the most patient. His constant and exaggerated irritation with the minor details of life, and the volcanic expression which he gave to his acute suffering from incidental noises, sights and smells—mere nothings which the normal man passes over unnoticed—though amusing at first, became quickly wearisome, if not alarming. It is not easy to understand how a terrible tornado of oaths, screams, gesticulations and flying sticks can be seriously prompted by a barking dog; nor will anyone readily admit that the whistling of a boy in the street can be a

good and sufficient reason for breaking a window with a flower-pot. Thus any friendly intercourse with him, though brightened with unique and delightful compensations, could never be reposedful. It was bound to be a guardedly attempted, difficult, dangerous and exciting experiment.

He was quick and astute in his judgement of character; but his fierce resentment of the slightest criticism made him too easily susceptible to flattery, and he was therefore constantly deceived.

He was extravagant and almost absurdly generous on a big scale; but curiously mean over matters of no importance.

He was certain and dogmatic in his opinions; but never conceited. He was always ready to learn, and indeed in matters of art he was apt to place too implicit a faith in the judgement of those whom he respected as experts.

He was in love with solitude; but he could never bear to be entirely alone.

He was never idle and he despised idleness in others; but his restlessness and varied interests divided and dissipated his energies.

Though his temper was so wild and ferocious —a recent chronicler of small beer has accused

him of having bitten a carpet!—yet, on occasions of moment, he could behave with remarkable restraint. In the witness-box, before a skilful barrister angling for an outburst, he once baffled his enemies with a convincing dignity.

He was domineering to such an extraordinary degree that few, if any, celebrities or nonentities, could withstand the force of his personality. His presence in a room demanded immediate recognition; nor was this necessarily won by rudeness and attack, for no one, when he chose, could have a greater charm of manner.

He was amusing and original in his conversation, sometimes witty, often outrageous and shocking, and always forthright. He took a wicked delight in embarrassing those with whom he talked, and he spared no one, neither for their helplessness nor their strength, man, woman or child, peer or peasant, from his sweeping condemnation or his biting ridicule. But his remarks were never dictated by a calculated pleasure in inflicting pain. On the contrary, he felt abnormally the afflictions of others, and his sympathy and sorrow were as prompt to express themselves as they were genuine in their expression. He spoke and acted under the per-

petual pressure of internal combustion, to relieve his own feelings, and if thereby, as often was the case, he offended the feelings of others, so much the worse for them!

Perhaps above all things he was simply, profoundly and thoroughly egotistical, with the natural, guileless and uncontrolled egotism of a child, and, like all egotists, he was incapable of toleration for the slightest symptoms of the same disease in others.

Comparisons are odious and analogies are not always helpful. They are apt to mislead as well as to assist. But it is worthy of remark that Lord Byron was one of Eden's favourite authors. Quotations from the poet's works were constantly on his lips, and it is not difficult to discern strong points of resemblance in their characters. Their respective positions in the world were also similar, for Eden was the master of a large fortune which permitted the indulgence of every whim, while, as a landowner and as head of an old county family, he was confirmed in a position of social superiority to which natural parts, or even the possession of wealth alone, would in those days scarcely have entitled him.

Thus he was induced neither by poverty nor obscurity of birth, nor by timidity—for he was physically and morally fearless—nor by the slightest vestige of self-discipline, to restrain the exuberance of his feelings. Nature had showered upon him with an uncontrolled hand her gifts and her curses alike, and without control he received them all, and without control he expended them.

A particular regard for honour and good faith ennobled this extravagant character, a strong sense of humour refreshed it, a peculiar tenderness of heart redeemed and softened it. And all this turbulent mixture, compressed in a graceful and athletic body, was dedicated to the daily worship and promotion of beauty.

So this remarkable figure stalked through life, with his head in the air and a superb assurance, but with sorrow and disillusionment in his heart.

When William Eden succeeded, he resigned his commission in the army and determined to enjoy himself. He hired a yacht and travelled overland to join it in the Mediterranean. He came home and boxed and shot and drove a

four-in-hand. He went up to London, to the Alhambra and the Gaiety, and to Toynbee's to see some horses. He rode races and, above all, he hunted. "We hunted at Heighington", reads a curt entry in his diary, so unlike his father's carefully detailed accounts and criticisms. "We hunted at Walworth." . . . "We hunted at Rushyford." . . . "We hunted at Little News-ham" . . . and on frosty days "We cut down trees".

His brother—"a better shot", he used to say, "and a better horseman than I was"—often stayed with him, but the youngest boy, a delicate child, lived with his mother in Bournemouth. And Lady Eden wrote sadly to a friend left behind in the North: "I never hear anything about my old home. I do not expect ever to go there again. It is too painful for me!" She mourned over her church, her friends in the choir. "I am so grieved no one from the Hall, except the servants, goes to church. It is very sad!" But there was a consolation. "I am so glad there is a nice house-keeper there."

In 1878 Eden became Master of the South Durham Hounds, and so he might have continued to the day of his death the life of an ordi-

nary, fox-hunting squire. But already something was beginning to unsettle him. This existence—hunting, felling trees, driving the team about the country, hurrying to London and back, visiting other people's houses to shoot and hunt again—it was not altogether satisfactory. Larking home one evening, not in the best of humours after a bad day, his favourite horse having behaved like a bloody fool, the tint in a grey evening sky—no vulgar sunset—at once softened and irritated his mood. His companion's voice jarred on him. His groom, when he dismounted, stank of tobacco, besides being a liar and a rogue. He was tired of horses and everything that belonged to them, particularly the people. They never used their eyes. They could never see anything. Whisky and water, horses and cigars, and occasionally a pretty woman, that was their taste, that was the sum-total of their education. Horrible thought! He would grow like them if he stayed here much longer. After three seasons as Master he sent in his resignation and went abroad.

During the next three years he visited Egypt, India, China, Japan, even America, and liked them all, except America. He admired the dig-



MASTER OF HOUNDS



nity and good manners of the East—"An Arab is as unconscious of you as a sheep"—but in the United States, even in those days, he was pestered by reporters and insulted with enquiries about his pedigree.

Nor did this country appeal to him from the artistic point of view, but from the others he returned with water-colours—as well as the skins of a black bear and a leopard—careful, amateurish drawings of the Himalayas, a fir tree against a snow mountain, a waterfall, or the white buildings of Agra and the plains, or palms by the side of the Nile. These were early attempts, but already some reflection of personality showed in these sketches, some hint of joy in performance, of the struggle for expression, the achievement through pain and suffering that was to come. The last water-colours, that he would paint in time, are as different from these almost as a Cézanne from an English professor, but he could never have reached them by another route. He never could abide the sloppy, the slap-dash and the fluke, in art or in anything else, and to his last day he despised the short cut to so-called modernity. "I don't say there should be no originality where it is felt," he wrote, "but

I feel bound to condemn it where it is a vulgarity, an eccentricity and a pose." If in the end he discovered a quality which transcends and immortalises form, it was through a painstaking and laborious progress, through constant searching, through tunnelling, not skipping, that he discovered it.

But meanwhile England claimed him again. Once more he became Master of Hounds and so remained this time for six consecutive seasons.

Those six years were the most care-free and the happiest of his life. All about him was glowing and splendid. He was still young, in the full pride of his health and strength, happy in his surroundings and in his occupation. His slightest word was law to all those with whom he came in daily contact and his desire for the best in everything was easily gratified. The country was quiet and prosperous. Taxation was, to us, ridiculously low and money poured into his pockets as quickly as it went out. Nonconformists and Labour Members were probably already in existence, but they did not cross the path of gentlemen in those days. Nothing mean, nothing embarrassing, nothing second-rate checked the

full course of his career, and his only sources of worry were in pheasants that flew wrong or in foxes that did not appear where they ought to be. His house was constantly full of guests, friends coming to hunt or to shoot with him; his stables were full of horses and coachmen and grooms and helpers and yellow carriages—brougham, buggy, phaeton, waggonette, pony-cart and sociable; and his gardens were almost as full of gardeners as flowers. There was cricket in the summer, with practice in the nets on the lawn, and some local demon bowling a terrific ball; and amusing though bloody boxing-matches between the gamekeepers; and home-brewed beer for refreshment; and on the high road the cheerful music of the coaching horn and the rataplan of Saul and Jonathan, the leaders, Peter and Paul, the wheelers—the Old Testament and the New—on their way to a flower-show.

And throughout the livelong day there were whoas and hollas, a flurry of sparks as the bellows wheezed and puffed, and the clean iron smell and the cheerful clatter of the blacksmith's shop. There was an English summer, in fact, with all the rough but sweet security of a

bygone England, with laughter and oaths and loud voices and red faces, and a close companionship between master and man, and no thought of the dyspeptic morrow.

In the winter there was hunting, the panoply of pink coats and a perfect "turn-out", hunt servants with polished boots and faces, the cream of horses and the satisfactory knowledge that he, the Master, could show his heels to anyone.

During these years William Eden established and increased the reputation which he already enjoyed. The following letter, written by a regular follower of the hunt towards the close of his mastership, will show in what light he was regarded as a sportsman.

"All I know about riding across a country has been picked up by watching and endeavouring to imitate the man who, ever since I heard of him, and before I knew him, had and keeps the reputation of being the best man to hounds in the North of England, and the best man I have ever seen, and whom I would back to go first to any visible point over a big country and consider my investment a good

deal safer than British Consols under a Radical Government.

“You have often been very complimentary to me and I hope you will believe that, however unsuccessful the imitation, the flattery is perfectly sincere. I often have felt envious of your power of decision in the saddle but would feel very glad if the latter should prove weak in your intention to live out of England such a very long time.

“Your letter, in spite of the kind things you say—and for which I thank you very much—makes me feel quite melancholy and as tho’ there was going to be a break up of everything sporting in South Durham.”

This was no vulgar flattery. As a horseman—“the neatest figure on a horse I have ever seen”, said a Master of Hounds to me the other day—he is still remembered in the north. In height and build he seemed made for a perfect seat and, in the field, his eye for country, his judgement and courage and the best horses which money could buy always carried him at the top of the hunt.

Jack Bevans, whipper-in for many seasons to

the South Durham Hounds, makes numerous references to Sir William in his book of reminiscences.<sup>1</sup> Here is his description of a famous run.

“The good horse ‘Bailiff’ (a dun) was really an extraordinarily natural jumper, and it was towards the end of Sir William’s second mastership, in the Spring of 1888, that there occurred a noteworthy run which put an end to the brilliant career of poor Bailiff who had carried his owner right bang in the front, when hounds ran hard, for seven seasons without a fall; quite a marvellous performance and a sort of record in its way I should imagine. On this day the fox was found in a field near Standalone by Mr. Peter Smitton, the trusty head-keeper at Windlestone, who knew the lying ground of this fox, and he went away with plenty of smell behind him, past Nunstainton and Sedgefield station where he crossed the Clarence Railway. The Master and Mr. Briggs jumped in and out of the line and had by far the best of the gallop over the cream of the Sedgefield

<sup>1</sup> *The Reminiscences of a First Whipper-in.* (William Dresser & Sons, Darlington.)

country, leaving Sands Hall and the Race Course on the left, and pointing straight for the Wynyrd Woods, reached in forty minutes; luckily, for some reason, the fox now turned sharp back and struck almost to the identical line he had come . . . eventually getting to ground just in front of the hounds near Bradbury village, after a fine run of over two hours.

“Poor Bailiff, who had never gone in more brilliant style all through the gallop, broke down near the end of it on the farm of Mr. Graham of Morden, who was attracted to the spot by Sir William’s language, and has not yet forgotten the incident and says that he will never forget it if he lives to be as old as Methuselah.”

Bevans adds that the Master, in relating the story, used to say that the grass has never since grown in that field.

Mr. George Lambton, whose name is familiar to every sportsman and whose lifelong experience of horses and the men who ride them gives him the right to speak with authority, has written a few lines on the subject of this memoir which may well be inserted here.

“Sir William Eden was a great friend of mine in my younger days and I always liked to spend a month with him in the winter at Windlestone. He was then Master of the South Durham Hounds and I used to enjoy that month immensely for Durham in spite of its coal pits was a good sporting country. Willie Eden was a very good man to hounds and a very fine horseman. He was quick tempered and impatient, but not so where horses were concerned, in fact all sorts of horses would go well with him and he could ride anything. As in other matters he was entirely devoid of fear and where hounds went he went, yet he seldom got a fall, which is the acid test of a good horseman. He was a good Field Master, severe but just, and he did not indulge in strong language when keeping his field in order, his rebukes usually being couched in a sarcastic vein. On one occasion when drawing a cover rented by the late Sir Ernest Cassel who then hunted with the South Durham and Lord Zetland’s Hounds, a rather bumptious member of the hunt said to him, ‘You won’t find here, Cassel has the foxes put down’. He replied, ‘That is what should be done to you’, and turned his back

on him, while the next moment a fox was holloaed away.

“Another time, after a long hunt with the Zetland Hounds we were running straight for the Windlestone covers. Sir William was shooting there the following day so he asked Lord Zetland if he would mind stopping the hounds. ‘Certainly’, said Lord Zetland who went to give the order to his huntsman Champion. Now the latter was a brilliant huntsman but spoilt and fond of his own way so he carried on, got on to a fresh fox and ran all through the coverts. ‘I see it is a case of Lord Champion and Mr. Zetland with these Hounds’, was Eden’s comment at the end of the hunt.

“At that time he always had two or three very useful steeplechase horses which he trained at Windlestone and there was nothing he liked better than riding a good school over fences. Although he was a man who never took any particular care of his health, he was always as fit as a fiddle, and as clean-winded as it was possible to be. I was once going to ride a horse of his called Tom Jones in a three and a half mile steeplechase at Tarporley and at the last moment I was taken ill and

could not ride, so he borrowed some boots and breeches, got up and rode himself, finishing second, and I was told that he would not have blown a candle out at the end of the race. He also won a steeplechase on this horse at Catterick Bridge.

“Besides being a fine rider he was a good shot and a really first class boxer. I remember Bat Mullens who was a great trainer of fighting men, telling me that he was about the best amateur he had ever known. A match was once got up between Eden and another gentleman who was said to be a champion and when Bat Mullens heard of it he said ‘For God’s sake stop it, they are both bad tempered men and neither will give in, but Sir William will kill the other’.

“He was a most loyal friend of the sort you want when your back is against the wall, but he made many enemies for he was incapable of hiding his real feelings, and to these he might be violent and bitter, but he was never ungenerous.

“Naturally his hot temper sometimes led him into quarrels with his friends but he had such a frank and open way of owning to being in the wrong that there could be no ill feeling

afterwards. When I stayed at Windlestone in the winter we used to play billiards together. He was a good player and I a moderate one, but sometimes I would fluke outrageously which annoyed him. One night when making a good stroke which I had tried for, he said, 'That's another of your d——d flukes'. I replied that it was not a fluke and he shouted 'Oh! you're a d——d liar as well as a fluker', whereat I lost my temper and left the room. The next morning he came to me and said 'Look here, I'm sorry about last night, the fact is I can't keep my temper at billiards and I shall never play again', and to the best of my knowledge he never did."

What had this Master of Hounds, who boxed and felled trees and shot pheasants, who was a member of the Coaching Club and the Turf, who rode his own races and won them, what had he to do with restraint in decoration? "In the dining-room lurks the gift of reticence," he wrote, "for there are no flowers and a silent grey background is very suitable to the rest of the surroundings." Where did he acquire perception in architecture? "I am sorry to believe they are going to put a sort of Louis XIV *quelquechose* on

the front of Buckingham Palace. Low be it spoken, for it must assuredly be a secret—or a joke." How was he capable of judgement in pictures? "Come and see my own immaculate Degas." How did he, with this "power of decision in the saddle", gain the nervous, sensitive refinement which is characteristic of his own water-colours, of those "nooks in country houses glowing with a tempered splendour, his church interiors seen in a greenish light, the fitful gleam and glance of which resembles that of faintly illuminated water"?<sup>1</sup> What had he in common with such men as Walter Sickert and George Moore, as well as with his huntsman, the cream of sporting society, and Bombardier Billy Wells?

There have been more famous sportsmen and greater artists than William Eden. There have been hunting men who have written good stories and good jingling verse, others who have painted pictures and carved statues to the admiration of fellow-sportsmen, knowing all the points of a horse, how a jockey or a gentleman sits in the saddle. There have been artists who have ridden and hunted—we have lately had *The Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man*—but rarely, if ever, has there

<sup>1</sup> Sir Claude Phillips in the *Daily Telegraph*, May 13th, 1913.

been a man so admired by sportsmen as a sportsman, and, with all the handicap of the stigma "amateur", of a title and of money, yet recognised by competent judges as an artist. "His elaborate interior of pottery on a mantelpiece and a picture by Francesco da Ribalta is a fine performance, as accomplished work as any living water-colour painter can show", wrote the critic of the *Athenæum*.

And this is the praise of George Moore:

"Sir William Eden is an amateur: we use the word in its original sense, and can conceive, therefore, no higher epithet of commendation. There are too few amateurs among us. . . . A glance at the pictures shows us that he is a painter who travels rather than a traveller who paints. . . . How many water-colour artists are there living who need hesitate to sign that tall drawing, some eight inches in height by four in width, representing a narrow jutting street with an awning, under which some turbaned figures are sitting? There is no sky above the street, the picture is without violent relief, a pink and a grey note blended and harmonised and united with refinement and skill. Examine the few lines that

appear. Are they not seen with feeling, and are they not feelingly rendered, and is there not the unmistakable beauty of touch of the born artist—of the amateur?”<sup>1</sup>

“How many” [wrote another critic] “could achieve the feat of presenting the light and sky seen through the two clerestories of ‘St. Jacques, Dieppe’? So far as overcoming a difficulty instead of evading it is concerned, this is the most brilliant work in the exhibition. Any-one who has been to Dieppe must have seen the striking effect, and many have tried to paint it. But who has ever succeeded until Sir William Eden?”<sup>2</sup>

But to-day the stables have forgotten their glory, no one knows how to sound the hunting horn, and the water-colours are scarcely remembered by a few perceptive friends and critics, not known at all to the man in the street, nor represented in a single public gallery. Whether the reason is that, through size and medium, they were too slight to merit permanent recognition, or whether the painter’s death at the beginning

<sup>1</sup> *Saturday Review*, December 22nd, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Morning Post*, October 12th, 1911.

of the war, when the minds of men were elsewhere engaged, and the fact that none of his work has since been exhibited, have been the cause of their passing into undeserved oblivion, time and a future opportunity may show. The public in the long run is the best judge, but only in the long run.

However that may be, if accomplishment has, after all, fallen short of power and promise, the personality remains, worth certainly an attempt to recapture; an unfulfilled genius perhaps, but a genius nevertheless, with all his shortcomings, his pains and torments, his waywardness, his charm, his high endeavour, his darkness and his gleams of fitful sun.

## A VENOMOUS BUTTERFLY

"There never was a more vulgar and indomitable cad, or a more vain and vicious beast. The man thinks no one dare collar him."

It was probably the fact that he had meanwhile married which encouraged William Eden to stay at home and continue the mastership of his hounds for so long. The beauty of his wife, even until the day of his death, never ceased to throw him into ecstasies. Triumphant he escorted her to all the houses in the neighbourhood, showed her off proudly to his friends. "Look at her!" he would exclaim, as they sat round his dining-room table. "Have you ever seen anything more beautiful?" And he was fond of quoting Browning:

If one could have that little head of hers  
Painted upon a background of pale gold,  
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!

No shade encroaching on the matchless mould  
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft  
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,



THE BARONET AND THE BUTTERFLY  
(From a cartoon by Max Beerbohm)



For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft  
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's  
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss  
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.  
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,  
How it should waver on the pale gold ground  
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!

For his children he had not the same un-qualified admiration. Children and dogs, who were generally associated in his mind, upset him with their idiosyncrasies, their barking and whistling and merriment. "A dog is barking", he writes, "and everyone is whistling in the streets." That was his idea of hell. And again, "I painted amidst shrieking children, glorying in my annoyance. And people say, why have you such a low opinion of human nature! After all 'the child is father of the man'. Children are natural and *brutes*!"

He could not endure, for long, even the presence of his own children. He had not the patience to suffer their moods and tears. He was incapable of placing his intellect on a level with theirs. Their casual irresponsibility irritated him. Their language and habit of thought were almost as incomprehensible to him as his to them, and

while they got on his nerves, he terrified them. When they were schoolboys, the fear of doing or saying the wrong thing and the public ridicule which would inevitably ensue made association with him, particularly before others, a torment to them. "Look where you are going, dear boy! Don't walk in every mess you can find! And don't slouch! Hold your head up and take an interest in life! Do you know where you are? Of course you don't. I believe if I were to put you in the park, you couldn't find your way home! Petticoat rule has been the ruination of you. It would ruin the damned. Are you capable of doing *anything* for yourself? I suppose the governess still gives you your bath?" All this, generally before strangers, was galling to a boy of fifteen. But there was entertainment as well. "Do you know what the female of a dog is called, dear boy? Well, that is what Mrs. So-and-so is!"

Undoubtedly they were right who said that he was not a fit companion for children, and he realised it himself. Whenever the holidays returned, he fled from his house like a hunted deer, and not chiefly from his children, but from all the paraphernalia of children—tutors and their pipes, tennis-parties, Christmas trees, "the babe

of Bethlehem and all that!" To a friend who had braved the holidays at Windlestone, perhaps even enjoyed them, he wrote: "The rush of 'Amusements' must have been terrible. Poor Windles! Spring cleanings now, I hope."

But he was fond of his family. They could cause him intense unhappiness, throw him into unreasoning rages, but they were never indifferent to him. He gave them the best of everything —education, food, clothes, shooting, ponies. Though he often expostulated, he never seriously grudged even extravagance on their behalf, and he was kind in his way also to strange children. A pretty little girl was sure of a welcome and to have presents showered upon her, and even an ungainly, awkward boy, unmercifully chaffed for his falling stockings, his dishevelled hair, his shy and embarrassed demeanour, was certain of compensation in the end. "Here, village idiot! Here is a sovereign for you!"

If any member of his family were ill, then there was the devil to pay. The slightest indisposition or mishap, unattended with even the remote possibilities of danger—a touch of 'flu, a broken collar-bone—would upset and worry

him for days. Then he would stride in a fever up and down the house, asking the opinion of this person and of that, from the stillroom-maid to the estate agent, yelling and swearing if their answers were unsatisfactory, too casual and reassuring or the reverse, telegraphing in all directions and writing the news to all his friends. He would immediately send for his old friend the local doctor, to consult him, even though the patient might be at the other end of England. He would wire, "McCullagh says so-and-so and so-and-so. Spare no expense. Get the very best man", and he would send grapes, flowers and short sympathetic letters.

The thought of pain and suffering was always a torture to him. "Ashley and I drove out last night and we analysed and agreed about life and death and judgement and Hell and sin and misery and God and man and sickness and misery and futility and never ending—and never knowing — grinding on — the Potter's clay.<sup>1</sup> Caesar made war on thirteen million people! And I suppose Napoleon many more. And hospitals and operations go on, and private misery and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tolstoy, in a private letter: "Fear, horror, death, the merriment of children, eating, bustling, doctors, falsehood, death, horror".

hideous pain, and no result." And more personally he wrote: "Tell her with my love, please, that all my heart goes out in love and pity and kindness to her, but that I look forward all the same to seeing her restored to health and having all the same pleasure in her society again. . . . I have telegraphed offering to come, and this you know is a genuine offer at any time."

In his letters to his friends there are many such references to their sufferings.

"My God, you poor devil, what Hell! Of course I would have come to see you if I had been in town—and at once—altho' you are a rotter and I would not trust you a yard, and you are tactless and combative and argumentative and unreliable, and lots of other hateful things—still I like not to say love you. I am truly sorry, but you have the pluck of the devil, besides other things of his, and will soon pull thro', but this appendicitis has no discretion! . . . I do hope you have not much suffering but fear you have, and really it is too bad. I will come and see you *directly* I return to town."

"About your knee I am unhappy. Surely

tho', no God could be so *cruel*. But then again there is no logic or experience in this—for God has been cruel. There is no mistake in this. Am thinking about it a great deal. What a worry for you! You are so brave and so rebounding. But you don't want this—you mustn't have it."

"Poor old C. It is a 'bloody world' and as you are the wife of a sailor you know what that means! There may be a better, but that is a poor consolation, for it doesn't prevent the fact that we suffer here! According to our reason and understanding there is no explanation. There you are, par exemple, 'good' and religious and virtuous and kind and unselfish and yet you are worried to death for no one's benefit, and very seldom happy. But take a labour member, a Nonconformist Minister, or an average hotel keeper; he will eat onions, smoke pipes, drink whiskey, and sleep with his neighbour's wife, and never have a headache or a conscience. And 'God is love'!"

However curiously expressed, there was no lack of sympathy in his composition. His valet truly said to him, "Ho Lord, Sir William, you

'ave the 'eart of an helephant", and, as he wrote himself, "Love and sympathy are the greatest of gifts, and rare, because they contain heart and intelligence which seldom go together".

As far as his children were concerned, he did not only sympathise with them in illness. He was as openly proud of their smallest success. Even when one of his boys won the Divinity Prize, though much amused, he was more pleased than disgusted. And if he could not give them any pleasure by his presence, his charming letters showed that he was not indifferent to them.

"MY DEAR OLD TIMOTHY—Now that you are really 15 years old, it is time you weighed more than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  stone!!

"Buck up, you tiny little man. I wish you many happy returns, with an increase of wisdom and stature in proportion to your years and in imitation of your papa.

"A 'hyperbole' is an 'exaggeration'. The other thing I can't find.

"It is lovely weather, so hot one cannot breathe, and now the flies have begun!

"Swallows have come and cuckoos—so all these pleasant things must have waited for your departure.

“Cotterel has got the flu and Shadburn a cold—Miss Fairfax a bilious attack—Mummie a backache—Marjorie is well—I am old.

“None of this is news, but your departure is of such a recent date that I will say no more but blessings on your chestnut head and rosy cheeks,

“From your devoted

“DADDIE”

“MY DEAR LITTLE NICHOLAS—I am going to write to Anthony for his birthday, so I will send this to you this time!

“You are of course being spoilt as usual!

“Can you swim?

“Can a duck swim?

[A drawing of a duck]

“Here is a duck a’swimming, as fat as you are thin and scraggy!

“The ponies are up in the stable. The ‘Saint’ or the ‘Devil’ or ‘whichever the devil he is’ has been kicked by *your* vicious little beast of a pony! But he will soon be all right again.

“All the others are well, but two of the gardeners have got the mange.

“I am quite well. I love you dearly and Anthony too, and am

“Your devoted

“DADDIE”

Hearing that one of his boys was depressed and unhappy at school, he sent him the following characteristic note:

“Be not downcast, oh my soul! Hope thou in the Lord! You are not a waster, thank God. You may yet be as great and good a man as

“Your affectionate

“DADDIE”

The beauty of his daughter filled him, from her earliest years, with a perpetual delight. “The children arrived safe and I think looking splendid, even after their journey. Marjorie is more lovely and lovable, if possible, than ever. I must harden my heart and have her painted by Millais.”

But chiefly, of course, his wife must be done, and done again, since none of the portraits of her were entirely satisfactory. Herkomer had painted her, a beautiful woman in a yellow evening dress against an appalling landscape background. Swan had painted her. Blanche had

painted her. Later on Sargent would paint her. But meanwhile, what about Whistler?

The story of the quarrel over Whistler's portrait of Lady Eden has been told *ad nauseam*: by Whistler's biographers; in his own, what an American called "curiously publicated advertisement", *The Baronet and the Butterfly*; and in innumerable garbled versions in the press. But the other side of the story has never been heard, and although it is all *vieux jeu* now and was never worth the great attention it received, a "row" is always amusing to the onlookers and a full account of it may suitably be given here. But before we begin the story and examine the immediate reasons for the quarrel, we may well remember that the fundamental cause lay in the characters of the two men. William Eden has been sufficiently revealed in these pages already to show that he was not a man easy to handle himself nor likely to respect the susceptibilities of others. And Whistler had to be approached with circumspection. Witty, sensitive, conceited, quarrelsome and courageous, it needed but a spark to set him flaring. Eden could supply without difficulty, not a spark but a furnace. He had never met Whistler, but he had doubtless heard

of his touchiness. If he had, it would make no difference to him. The fact that the painter was a demi-god in the eyes of his admirers and accustomed to being treated as such would have no influence on his own conduct towards him. Whistler, with his vanity and his position in the world, no doubt considered that, as Whistler, he was entitled to the deference of everybody. Eden undoubtedly believed that, as Eden, he was as good as anybody and would show anybody that he was. "Walk", he used to say, "as if you had bought the earth!" And he certainly did. Two such dogmatic, domineering, inflammable characters, with nothing in common but a fierce temper and a love of art, were bound to explode. With or without a "Serajevo" the conflagration was inevitable.

No sooner had the idea of a new portrait occurred than a letter was promptly despatched to the Goupil Galleries. A head—that was all that he wanted—"If one could have that little head of hers painted upon a background of pale gold"—just a head. How much would Mr. Whistler charge to paint a head? But the answer was disappointing. In reply to it Eden wrote, "I fully recognise and appreciate Mr. Whistler's merits, but I hoped his charge for a head only

would have been much less than £525. I cannot therefore at that price think of it, especially in face of my already large expenditure in that line with Mr. Swan."

But he did not give up the idea, with the result that, thanks to the intervention of a common friend, Mr. George Moore, a price for a sketch in water-colours was agreed upon. But unfortunately the price was too vaguely defined.

In January 1894 Whistler wrote:

"DEAR SIR WILLIAM EDEN—Your letter has only just been handed to me, but this may still, perhaps, reach you in the afternoon. It is quite understood as to the little painting, and I think there can be no difficulty about the sum. The only really interesting point is that I should be able to produce the charming picture, which, with the aid of Lady Eden, ought to be expected. Once undertaken, however slight, for me, one work is as important as another, and even more so, as Calino said. As for the amount, Moore, I fancy, spoke of one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds."<sup>1</sup>

So the "head" has faded into its background

<sup>1</sup> *The Baronet and the Butterfly*, p. 6.

“BROWN AND GOLD. PORTRAIT OF LADY E.”





of pale gold. Eden had originally wanted a head, but now it is a question only of a "little painting", a "charming picture". Some day, perhaps, he will find someone to do justice to his wife, to see her as he sees her. Meanwhile a little sketch of her by such a master as Whistler will at least be interesting to have and will almost surely be beautiful. So the matter is agreed and the painter sets to work.

The result was not a water-colour but a minute oil, Whistler, in this instance, having preferred this medium. As the picture is no longer in existence, it is not possible to give its exact dimensions, but from the recollections of the sitter it appears to have been about twelve inches by eight. In this picture, approximately the size of a small water-colour, Lady Eden was shown at full length seated in the corner of a sofa in a golden brown dress against a brown background. The water-colour illustrated on the plate facing page 56 was painted by Sir William and is identical, at least so far as his memory and that of his sitter permitted, with the colour and arrangement of the disputed picture. The drawing facing page 78, made in Whistler's studio by the same hand, shows the artist at work on his "little

painting" and will give an idea of its size. It was exhibited by Whistler in Paris, where it had been painted, under the title of "Brown and Gold. Portrait of Lady E."

Meanwhile Eden had paid for it. He was leaving Europe and decided to pay before he left. On his last visit to the studio, therefore, when the picture was all but finished, he handed Whistler a cheque for one hundred guineas.

Probably nine people out of ten, ninety-nine out of a hundred, would not so readily have decided that the exact value of the picture was no more than the possible minimum which had been agreed. If they had not actually given the maximum of one hundred and fifty pounds, they would have asked the painter to fix the exact price or at least consulted or pretended to consult with him about it. This course would seem indicated by the ordinary rules of politeness. But Eden was not the man to be guided by ordinary rules, of politeness or anything else. It seemed to him that he was at perfect liberty to decide on any sum between a hundred and a hundred and fifty pounds. He was not disappointed with the picture. He found it charming. But it was so small, so slight, so almost nothing

at all, that he considered a hundred guineas adequate payment. Why should he consult Whistler about it? He had to pay the money, he was going to buy the picture, not Whistler! And Whistler himself had said, in so many words, "Anything from a hundred to a hundred and fifty pounds". Presumably he meant what he said? Then what was there to talk about?

Now it happened that the day on which this payment was made was St. Valentine's Day, and so Eden, as he handed to the painter the envelope which contained the fateful cheque, said jocularly and not unnaturally, "Here is your Valentine!" This was no more than a harmless little joke, with no *arrière pensée* attached to it—a joke which, it will be seen, he had already made in writing—but combined with the cheque and its minimum inscription it produced an unfortunate effect. It seemed to Whistler that this was adding insult to injury. "Sir William, under cover of a friendly compliment, a graceful little courtesy, had *slipped the minimum into his hand in the cunning guise of a valentine.*"<sup>1</sup>

The envelope, besides the cheque, contained the following note:

<sup>1</sup> *The Baronet and the Butterfly*, p. 9.

*"February 14th, 1894*

"DEAR MR. WHISTLER—Herewith your valentine—cheque value one hundred guineas. The picture will always be of inestimable value to me, and will be handed down as an heirloom as long as heirlooms last!

"I shall always look with pleasure to the painting of it—and, with thanks, remain

"Yours sincerely,

"WILLIAM EDEN"

Whistler, who had opened the envelope as soon as his client had gone, sat down and wrote the following acknowledgement:

*"February 14th*

"MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM—I have your valentine. You really are magnificent!—and have scored all round.

"I can only hope that the little picture will prove even slightly worthy of all of us, and I rely on Lady Eden's amiable promise to let me add the few last touches we know of. She has been so courageous and kind all along in doing her part. With best wishes again for your journey.

"Very faithfully,

"J. MCNEILL WHISTLER"

It is quite clear that Whistler is annoyed, but it also seems clear that he is undecided and has not yet realised how annoyed he is, or is going to be. He does not yet know what line to take; or why, in the same short note, this sneer—“You really are magnificent!”—and these friendly references to “final touches”, these “best wishes for your journey”?

But the baronet reads the sneer, and now, in his turn, he is indignant. He will go round and have it out with Whistler. He does so the next day. “What do you mean by this letter?” he asks. But Whistler evades the direct answer in witticisms. “You say,” continues Eden, “ ‘You really are magnificent!’ ”—“Well, are you not?”—“You seem to wish to insinuate, sir, that I have been mean in my dealing with you. If you tear up that cheque, I will give you this one for one hundred and fifty guineas.” But the Butterfly refuses. “The time has gone by”, he says.<sup>1</sup>

Why has the time gone by? What is the difference between yesterday and to-day? The difference is that meanwhile Mr. Whistler’s dignity has been hurt. Therefore he refuses the new cheque. But still his attitude is uncertain. There

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, p. 11 (Whistler’s account of the conversation).

is no definite quarrel, as is shown by Lady Eden's note written on March 30th (Sir William had meanwhile left Europe) and prompted by the painter's desire, expressed in his letter of February 14th, for another sitting:

"DEAR MR. WHISTLER—When shall I come for my last sitting? Any day after Monday will suit me. You see I have changed my address."

But to this there was no reply.

So far one can understand the painter's attitude and even sympathise with it, though it may seem somewhat childish. But now he goes completely astray.

The position is this. Either a man is or is not a tradesman. Either he is concerned with getting the full value, or what he believes to be the full value, for his work, or he is not. A tradesman has no time for finer feelings. If he considers that he is inadequately paid, he says so, and will naturally accept a larger cheque. But Whistler refused the larger cheque. He is not a tradesman, then. It is not the money which interests him. Therefore he may be permitted to indulge in fine feeling, to consider himself hurt, if not in-

sulted, by the way in which he has been treated. The larger cheque is no redress for this treatment, therefore it is refused. Well and good. But what is the next step? Having told the baronet, or rather, permitted the baronet to guess, what he thinks of him, having accepted the smaller cheque and refused the larger in lieu of it, there seem only two possible courses left. The painter must either deliver the picture or—though his right to pursue this second course seems, at the least, very doubtful—he must immediately return the cheque and “call off” the deal. But Whistler adopted neither of these alternatives. He paid the cheque into his bank, he exhibited the picture, and he never delivered it! Neither the commercial instincts of a tradesman nor the tender susceptibilities of an artist can justify this extraordinary behaviour.

When, after repeated letters requesting delivery to which no reply was vouchsafed, legal proceedings were instituted against him, the artist at last, ten months later, instructed his solicitors to return the money. But it was then William Eden’s turn to say: “Too late! It is not the money but my picture which I want.” Finally, the day before the case was heard,

Whistler informed the prosecutor that he had painted out Lady Eden's head, and when the picture appeared in court, it was seen that, while the general arrangement, even the colour of the dress, was the same, not only had the head been painted out but the head of another sitter had been substituted.

It must have been obvious to any sane man—and Whistler was certainly no lunatic—that he could not have his cake and eat it, that he could not keep both the money and the picture, that he could not, least of all, then prepare to sell it again as the portrait of someone else! Was it simply a form of feminine pique that induced this curious behaviour? Not entirely. No doubt he was piqued, but he had another reason. He informs us of it himself in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

“ ‘Pourquoi, Monsieur’—I was prepared for the question—‘pourquoi, si vous n’avez pas l’intention de livrer le tableau, aviez vous accepté le chèque?’

“ ‘Pour qu’il vienne me le réclamer ici—devant tout Paris!’ ”

The italics are Whistler’s.

So that was what he wanted. Advertisement!  
It is true that he goes on:

“Now, this is what has happened. His story is told!—and the whine of it remains in the ears, and the odour of it in the nostrils, of my confrères—and I doubt if the insinuating amateur will again unhook in a hurry any picture, humbly cozened for as sketch, from easel in any studio at home or abroad.”

And this is very amusing and offensive, but it is not equally convincing.

This picture of the *Butterfly* acting altruistically for his confrères, bearing all the odium, worry and expense of law-suits and publicity for the sake of his fellow-artists, is really too good to be true. Was this man, with his numerous quarrels and law-suits, his bitter tongue, his other and apparently nearer and dearer “Art” of making enemies—was this the man to take a burden upon himself, to put himself in the wrong, to suffer publicity, for the sake of his colleagues? For *Frith*, perhaps, who “must have tossed up” to decide whether he would become an artist or no? for *Rossetti*, who ought to

frame his sonnets? or for Leighton, who “sometimes painted”? It is clear to those with the smallest knowledge of Whistler’s life that, far from suffering publicity, he enjoyed it. And what a glorious opportunity was this to bring the world’s eyes upon him, to show him off to his best advantage, duelling this time with no pundit of art, no professor respected by the people, no dangerous Oscar who might give as good as he got, but with such a foil to his wit as in his dreams he could wish no better, a proper butt, a society amateur, a baronet, ye gods! a sporting English squire, to pillory gaily, to pink deliciously before an applauding Parisian and London public!

Unfortunately for Whistler, as the case was heard in Paris, where the civil law does not permit the examination of witnesses, no witticisms could be heard in court and published afterwards, to the delight of many, as in the Ruskin case. He was therefore dependent on the indiscretions of his opponent for those lively sallies, those stinging letters to the press, in which he delighted. Eden realised the strength of his position and determined to give the witty artist no excuse for the display of his wit. He refused to

be drawn. One brief interview with Sir William, however, which appeared in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald* and was confined to statements of fact, gave Whistler a slight opportunity, of which he made the most. In the course of a letter commenting on this interview he refers to his adversary as a “Bunko Baronet”, “a thrifty Maecenas who, through life, surely never gave away anything” except himself; expresses the opinion that “a few ancestors seizing upon odd droves of oxen . . . is [*sic*] but poor backing for a modern Baronet in his clumsy commercial struggles”; and concludes with an adapted quotation containing an otiose “r”, “Grattez le Baronet, et vous trouvez—(quelquefois) le Boutiquier!”

The insolence of this letter, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, drew an answer from a cousin of William Eden, the “Orson of the clan”, as Whistler afterwards called him. It was a good answer, but of course only added fuel to the flame and gave Whistler another opportunity to use his pen. Eden was, therefore, angry with his well-meaning and, indeed, well-hitting champion. But silence was his weapon, and he had impressed the necessity for it on his allies. He did

not wish for defenders. From the moment in which the affair had been placed in the hands of his solicitors he washed his own hands of it, and resolved, so far as he personally was concerned, to pay no attention to anything his opponent might say or write, but to continue on his daily round as if Whistler did not exist. This was not only the most dignified course but the wisest. Whistler had doubtless heard of the baronet's reputation for fiery temper. He must have had an inkling himself of the character of his future antagonist during his frequent visits to the studio in the Rue du Bac, and he was probably looking forward to stinging this irascible and clumsy squire into a futile rage. This unexpected and complete indifference must therefore have been particularly galling to a man to whom controversy and back-chat were meat and drink. Mr. Walter Gay writes of him:

“His anger at Du Maurier, for the not too amiable sketch of him in the first edition of *Trilby*, was violent enough. But the Sir William Eden case stirred the very depths of his being. When relating the oft-told tale to me, he used to grasp my arm with such frenzy, in

order to impress his point upon me, that he almost seemed to mistake me for the offending Baronet.”<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that the baronet’s silence was at least a contributory cause of these extreme feelings. One cannot score off a mummy.

As the result of the trial on March 6th, 1895, Whistler was ordered to deliver the portrait as originally painted, to refund one hundred guineas, the price of the portrait, and to pay a thousand francs damages. But Whistler appealed, and in 1897 the final judgement was given. Whistler was to keep the picture on condition that he made it unrecognisable as a portrait of Lady Eden, he was to return the hundred guineas with five per cent interest, he was to pay a thousand francs damages with interest and the costs of the first trial, and Eden was to pay the costs of the appeal.

Whistler professed himself delighted with this verdict and straightway decided to make “a beautiful little book” of the whole case. “During many months”, his biographers tell us,

<sup>1</sup> E. R. and J. Pennell, *Life of James McNeill Whistler* (Heinemann), vol. ii. p. 154.

“proofs of *The Baronet and the Butterfly* filled his pockets. As he had read pages of the *Ten o’Clock* to Mr. Alan S. Cole, so he read pages of *The Baronet and the Butterfly* to us, and sometimes to the Council of the International after the meetings.”<sup>1</sup>

The Council of the International—whatever that may be; it sounds like the League of Nations!—must have been extremely bored, for the book has little in it of general interest. It consists, for the most part, of the two long speeches of the advocates, translated into excellent English, and save for a letter or two, a dedication, an “argument”, an envoi, marginal comments and butterfly embellishments, there is nothing of Whistler in it. “In the marginal notes,” we are told, “the dedication, the argument, he was brilliant and witty.”<sup>2</sup> As the book is now rare, a few samples of this wit and brilliance may here be given, so that the reader can judge for himself.

The motto is “*Noblesse Abuse!*” and then comes this preliminary canter:

<sup>1</sup> E. R. and J. Pennell, *Life of James McNeill Whistler* (Heinemann), vol. ii. p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 199.

“EDEN VERSUS WHISTLER  
“THE BARONET AND THE  
BUTTERFLY  
“A VALENTINE WITH A VERDICT

“BEING

“A MOST RARE AND FASCINATING HISTORY, FROM THE PALACE OF THE COURTS, WHEREIN IS SHOWN, WITH MUCH WIT AND CIRCUMSTANCE, HOW THE GENTLE MASTER, UNSUSPECTING, WAS SIGHTED, TRACKED, WAYLAID, CIRCUMVENTED, AND RUN TO EARTH BY COMMERCIAL KNIGHT OF UNTIRING INDUSTRY!

“TOGETHER WITH THE AMUSING INTRODUCTION OF THE HIND, HENCHMAN, EXPERT AND GO-BETWEEN.<sup>1</sup>

“AND, FURTHER ON, SETTING FORTH THE METHODS, DEVICES, CAJOLERIES EMPLOYED FOR THE ENSNARING, ENTRAPPING, BEWILDERING, AND FINAL CONFUSION OF THE ALL-CONFIDING SWEET AND SIMPLE PAINTER.

“CULMINATING IN THE ABRUPT, INGENIOUS, AND STUPENDOUS INVENTION OF THE ‘VALENTINE’!—TOGETHER WITH ITS APPLICATION, AND MANNER OF USE.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. George Moore.

“AND, IN THE RECOUNTING OF SUCH EXCELLENT MATTER, IS AGAIN CURIOUSLY BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE CONTINUED FALLACY, DANGER, IMMODOESTY, IMMORALITY, AND MONSTROUS INCONVENIENCE OF SHAMELESS FRIENDSHIP.”

The dedication, under the drawing of a toad against which a butterfly darts its sting, is as follows:

“To

“Those CONFRÈRES ACROSS THE CHANNEL who, refraining from intrusive demonstration, with a pluck and delicacy all their own, ‘sat tight’ during the struggle, these decrees of the Judges are affectionately dedicated.”

(What reason or what opportunity the “Confrères across the Channel”, *i.e.* in England, had to show their “pluck”, does not seem quite apparent!)

Next comes the brilliant and witty “Argument”.

“Sent to the stocks, by belted Briton, that he may there be pelted with unclean egg by

the Philistine of the market, in his upright wrath, and behold!—This is the man whom the nation delighteth to honour!

“And yet he hath done these things, this mocker of Baronets!

“And they come out to meet him, with heralds and banners, and trumpeters, from fair France!

“And the law of the land is altered—and new statutes are made in his honour!

“And Haman the Islander is shamed before the people—and is hanged, as an offering to the Distinguished One!—to appease him, and for his heart’s pleasure.

“And there is great rejoicing! And it is commanded that a record of these things be kept in the chronicles of the court.

“And it is graven upon the tablets of the Causes Célèbres—and the new law is added to the Code Napoléon!

“And the name thereof is famous forever!”

One marginal note will suffice as an example.

Eden’s advocate, in the course of his speech, says:

“The court was told that Sir William Eden haggled about the price. In the newspaper, on the contrary, we have Mr. Whistler’s testimony that Sir William behaved like an honourable man. He had received an equivocal letter, and he asked for an explanation. When he perceived that the painter’s irritation was probably caused by dissatisfaction with the price, how did he act? ‘Give me back my cheque, and I will send you one for 150 guineas.’ You know with what brutality—or humour, as we are told it was—Mr. Whistler replied.”

Against this, Whistler writes:

“Tardy generosity, in flagrant form of hasty hush money!—tout bonnement! A grotesque spectacle of panic-stricken gentility, never to be forgotten.”

But the book had little success, doubtless because, as Mr. Whistler’s biographers say, “the report of the trial was dull reading”.

Such was the notorious Whistler case. It does not throw any particular light on the character

of the subject of this memoir—save through the painter's somewhat distorted and distorting lens! —for the reason already given, namely, that he himself, once the matter had passed into the hands of his solicitors, paid no attention to it. He did not even appear in court during the trial. The affair would scarcely have been noticed by the public at all but for Whistler, who blew an unceasing solo about it on his trumpet. It is Whistler's case far more than Eden's. It would not, therefore, have merited such lengthy treatment as has here been given but for the fact that, through whatever cause, it created such a stir at the time that the matter is still casually, and often inaccurately, referred to in the press whenever the semblance of an opportunity occurs. The facts of the case, indeed, have been so slightly regarded that it has actually been stated, or at least inferred, that it was Eden who destroyed the picture!

The story may be concluded with a letter in reply to an American, an intending biographer of Whistler, who had written to William Eden asking whether he could accept the view of the case given in *The Baronet and the Butterfly* as correct.

“*Private.*

April 8th, 1900

WINDLESTONE, FERRY HILL

“DEAR SIR—I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance and scarcely know whether to answer your letter or not.

“It has been my principle ever since my dispute with Mr. Whistler began to take no notice of anything, either in print or otherwise. However, as you are writing a life of Mr. Whistler, it could perhaps do no harm if you heard that, from my point of view, neither Mr. Whistler’s letters, so far as I have read them, nor the notices in the Papers have ever contained a correct version of the case. I have not read *The Baronet and the Butterfly* and I have never met anyone who has—but from extracts etc. I gather it is somewhat extravagant and incorrect. As I see it the case is this:

“I commissioned Mr. Whistler to make a sketch portrait in water-colours of Lady Eden. He preferred oils, and he selected a panel about the size of half this sheet of notepaper, and after seven or eight sittings had practically completed a very pretty suggestion of his sitter.

“The price originally arranged was ‘from 100 to 150 guineas’. From the size and slightness of the work I considered 100 guineas the value of the picture, and sent a cheque accordingly. Mr. Whistler cashed the cheque, exhibited the picture, and refused to deliver it.

“I sued him in the Paris Courts with the ultimate result that he had to return the money with interest and costs, and pay £40 damages, but was allowed to keep the portrait.

“I refrain from comment, but you are welcome to make use of this plain statement of facts, without however, please, naming your authority.

“Yours faithfully,

“WILLIAM EDEN”

The only other relics of the case that I can find are a letter from Eden of which the material extract is quoted at the head of this chapter and a copy of *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* with an inscription on the fly-leaf to the Baronet from the *Butterfly!*

Eden never allowed his opinion of Whistler as a man to influence his admiration for him as an artist. He was the possessor of two or three

of his slighter works, which were always hung in a place of honour, and in 1912 he wrote to the *Yorkshire Post*:

“Brabazon’s work is beautiful, and is complete in colour, drawing, construction, placing, composition and, above all, in that mystic beauty so essential in water-colours that is called quality, *i.e.* more or less, the beauty and texture of the medium, irrespective of anything else. Turn it upside down and see. Whistler had it both in oil and water.”

The Butterfly was not so broad-minded.

“One day in Bond Street, he met a Follower, just returned to town, arm-in-arm with the ‘Baronet’. The Follower at once left a card at Fitzroy Street. Whistler wrote ‘Judas Iscariot’ on the card, and sent it back. A few weeks later, the New English Art Club hung Sir William Eden’s work, and with it, he said, their shame, upon their walls. He complimented them, much to their discomfort, on their appetite for ‘toad’.”<sup>1</sup>

And he never forgave them.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Whistler, ut supra*, vol. ii. p. 183.



WHISTLER AT WORK

*James Whistler*



## WOMEN AND PHEASANTS

“I still go on, loving my enemies, and abusing my friends.”

“Don’t shoot low-flying birds!”

“If Sir William were less of a society man”, wrote a critic in the *Saturday Review*, “he would be considered more of an artist, for artist he is.”

There is truth in this remark, for he knew a host of people and sometimes enjoyed seeing individuals, but he was not “a society man” in the accepted sense. His tastes were too positive and too peculiar to allow of his mixing indiscriminately and with any pleasure with the members of a casual house-party or the usual frequenters of ballrooms. Even in the houses of his best friends he was never completely in his element. From one of these he wrote as follows: “We go home to-morrow. It has been all peaceful and nice here—not exciting tho’. I haven’t found ‘a bit of fresh’! The shooting has been good eno’ and the weather on the whole good too. To-morrow we shoot those beastly rabbits, *bloody* they will be!

.... Flowers galore are in every room, and the reek of stale tobacco in the principal room is worse than acrid scent! I had two pipes at me on the way to the Meet this morning!"

He smoked scarcely anything himself—a small cigarette after each meal—and his dislike of other people's tobacco was very genuine. "I am going visiting. I wonder what they will think of me. I *hate* the programme and prospect of cigars and pipes and dogs and scent, but with luck and patience it will soon be over." To him the only consolation to be drawn from tobacco lay in the possibility that it might ruin the constitution of the human race, "with the ultimate result, let us hope, that it will destroy it altogether".

But cigars and other smells were not the only things which he disliked in the houses of others.

"My dear Eve," he wrote, "it was very kind of you to suggest Lady B—— to ask me, and please thank her. But I am off—and besides I really *can't*, it's not affectation, stand those 'sort of' surroundings. Crimson ramblers and calceolarias against a red-brick house—all of them framed in self-satisfaction."

And again, to the same correspondent: "Any time you like, and the sooner the better. I shall

be glad of your company in the garden, *among the flies!* But there are other things. There are sweet smells, and beautiful things to look at—no cigars, no bridge and no dogs. *A propos*, I am just back from Newmarket. There were 4 dogs in a small house—on the chairs, sofas, flower beds—whining, barking, fidgeting. Truly about tastes there is no disputing. The bore is being in a world where there is only one (yourself) of that taste. I am like ‘a lost man’ in a crowd; and yet there must be some *woman* who thinks as I do. I don’t believe *there is a man.*”

It is improbable that there was anyone, man or woman, who could whole-heartedly sympathise with him. Those who might have agreed with him about the ugly artificiality of pompous surroundings would have been content with the beauty of a whitewashed wall and a kitchen table. But however much he might, and did, approve of these as a solace to his eye, the material discomforts which they involved would have made him miserable. Neither with artists nor the denizens of the comfortable world of house-parties, horses and motor-cars was he ever in complete accord. Both looked upon him as an amusing oddity, and while these could not under-

stand his rage at a scarlet flower-bed, to those, his wealth, his luxurious surroundings, the impossibility of associating him with a third-class restaurant in Soho or with any such detail in the accepted *entourage* of art, made of him a person interesting and worth cultivating, but altogether outside the natural orbit of their daily existence. The Estes and the Medicis would have understood him. With a Renaissance noble he would have found much in common. But in the days in which he lived Art had ceased to serve as the inspiration of palaces and was gone to the kennels to get herself a drink. Not with wealth but with poverty, not with the successful and the splendid but with the despised and the outcast, not with the respectable supporters of law and order but with the bitter revolutionaries, was Art now forced to take up her abode, to find a refuge from her triumphant enemies; and the poor devil in silk and velvet who needed her, the lover, the real amateur, the wretched freak of a Pharisee, must hunt for her in solitude.

And so William Eden was forced back upon his valet for sympathy and the solace and vexation of his own peculiar, unaccommodating opinions.

But although it is probable that no one

thought as he did, he was right in supposing himself more in harmony with women than with men. Women are broader-minded, at least so far as men are concerned, than the other sex. They are less hampered by tradition. They have more opportunity, more leisure, to develop and to appreciate individuality. They will put up with more. Men are apt to regard any excess and peculiarity as exotic rivals to their own sound sense (or even to their own peculiarity). Where they do not understand, they dislike, through fear of being conquered. But women like to be conquered, they are attracted by the peculiar, and if they are unable to pursue it with their intellect, they can still follow through their intuition, their more ready and more lively sympathy. Moreover, Eden admired them—their looks, if not their intelligence—and the stranger, the more original, their admirer, the greater the compliment to them.

And so it was that while, in the course of his life, one man after another left him, avoided him, or definitely quarrelled with him, wearied of his moods and his childishness, he rarely, if ever, finally quarrelled with a woman. They remained his friends until the end.

Yet he constantly abused them, chiefly for not paying sufficient attention to him, not coming to see him often enough, not writing to him. Failure to reply promptly to his letters was a constant source of anger and annoyance. Not to answer letters immediately is idleness, selfishness and bad manners. It is impossible to keep up a friendship with a woman who will not respond or correspond. In the letters which follow, this aspect of his character is constantly illustrated, as well as others which have been already noticed.

“Well done, Marion Urban Smith, you have written within a week! How many water-colours have you done? Condole with Woodall at meeting two ‘suffragettes’ in his garden. One’s garden is one’s own even more than the house with red roof and terra cotta front against purple bougainvillea.

“Life is a considerable Hell tho’ there are nice things in it, which one cannot enjoy because one dreads to lose them.

“I like your quotation from Moore, but I cannot wade through him even for the gems.

“A boy is whistling in the street. I wish so

much he was dead and that I could *see* him assassinated like the King of Greece.”

“I am writing from 18 Duke Street. It is an annexe of the Cavendish, and here I am going to settle, *vice* 32 Old Queen Street, which is lost and not regretted. Sybil was quite right. It was *not* a nice house and—for *London*, *bien entendu*—I don’t like the situation. This *is* London, as Sickert said of my sketches of Venice.

“Almost or quite the last time I heard from you, you were palpitating and fluttering. I hope you are sound now? and coming out of your dormouse hole. Don’t give in. Let me hear, please.

“I remember you wrote a fair attempt at sympathy in my trouble of life, but you always stop half way. You have no moral courage. You have the courage of your opinions, but your convictions perish. A poor religion!

“I am painting in St. Paul’s, *certainly*, yes certainly, the most beautiful building in the world. I will *not* have your Gothic at all, so there.

“I have also been to Windsor and done St.

George's Banners. What a foul place Windsor is! Town and castle—dismal, squalid, tasteless, sad—and respectable. Royalty and 'Divine Service' do attend!"

"You are quite hopeless, my dear. You are too idle to read my letters and remember the dates I give you. It's awful. You must make your own arrangements about next week now, for you have upset all mine."

"Thanks for your belated letter, to hand. You will always be the same, my dear—a lazy little devil, at best. It is of course idle to say you haven't time to write a letter in a week!"

"I met George Moore in the street and brought him here. He is very interesting, white, fat and maggot-y."

"Another fit of the slows, my dear! I am going up to town to-morrow—much to show you. Let me know.

"By the way, Blanche threw me over three times—never came at all and never wrote to apologise. Exit Blanche."

"MY DEAR EVE—Your unpunctuality and

carelessness are unpardonable—really! but I must say you always ‘come up smiling’ with your lovely blue eyes and all!

“When people say they ‘haven’t time’ for such and such, it is simply a question of selection. One must sacrifice one thing to do another, and one chooses the thing one likes best! Anyhow, you’re charming, I’m very fond of you, but you are *sometimes* damned annoying! However, I love you?

“Of course Tweed didn’t come to the exhibition. I have done well there, don’t you think?

“Partridges drowned—hay rapidly spoiling—Hurrah for the Kingdom of Heaven!”

“DEAR MISS SMITH—Wake up! India train is starting for you in five minutes!

“Will you spend Sunday painting in empty house in Queen Anne’s gate? I am better but not ‘quite better’ (Servants’ Hall) so is Sybil—better, not Servants’ Hall. She goes home to-morrow. I don’t. I go to Baden next week.

“George Moore ‘crazy’, as Robin says, about the Russian dancers, which makes me ‘tired’. About my Show, ‘as good as anyone’,

‘You are avenged on Whistler for you have done a better thing’—all genuine, felt and spasmodic. Very pleasant. Hope you are proud of your irritable artist gentleman friend!”

“You are the best illustration I know of wit without humour and result without energy! A tardy result though, I must admit!

“Your remarks re W. are delightful—his dreadfully new clothes that seem still to be hanging on a peg, and his dancing energy that is so *sadly* out of place, and the profound and common *goodness* of the man, his learning and his bad taste. You have hit him off exactly. But fancy my painting *with the object* of upsetting the bourgeois! Fancy having any object in painting at all—poor man, poor man! No wonder at his criticisms and his taste!

“I don’t like your quotation so much as your own opinions. It is too involved. I have to *think* what it means. It is manufactured, not thought, like the difference, say, between a plum cake and a mushroom.

“I don’t see that Miss Evans’s illness is an excuse for not writing—on the contrary. However, I cannot write such long letters

when I have to wait for answers. The reciprocity fades."

"MY DEAR E. F.—Your conduct absolutely amazes me. Here have I been waiting for you, having been put off, day in and day out, since the 1st of August, and now you chuck altogether.

"It makes all the difference whether you come now or later because, as I told you, now we are alone—later, the house full—people, professors, school-boys.

"I am awaiting a reply to my telegram. Why you could not have come yesterday or to-day, I don't understand. Why not from Wednesday to Saturday even? and if you don't mind chucking me, why not Mrs. Hunter, and go there Sunday or Monday? It's on the way. Perhaps you don't know that!!

"Anyhow, you have gone back I don't know where. It's hopeless this sort of thing. The best of women are hopeless, and a person who is unreliable is the most useless of all. *It's bloody.*

"Just got your wire. Wednesday is no use. I didn't say Wednesday would suit me better than Saturday. Come Friday till Monday or I

will never speak or write again. I have lovely empty days now—later on not a minute. House full, tennis parties, noise, scrimmage, discomfort. However, you have done it.

“Yours ‘truly’ no more—*tradesman’s* feelings *only*.”

“DEAR EVE FAIRFAX—You are ‘a darling’—but I think I told you I was leaving tomorrow! *How* like Eve Fairfax!

“I go to town Tuesday. Come to *Windles* for the day on Monday. It is probably your last chance! I will send the car to Darlington. But for God’s sake don’t come on the wrong day to the wrong station at the wrong moment!”

But he could write to women in a more gentle vein.

“Of course you know that whatever I can get you, you shall have. How much cloth do you want for a suit, and when do you want it, as it has to be made? I wish I could see you in it, but I shall.

“I hope you are better? How is it everyone is ill or sad—ill with illness or sad with sym-

pathy? I have been frightened about my Marjorie and I shall be glad when I get her home. She has had 'flu' but is better. A telegram yesterday says the doctor comes no longer, but it doesn't answer to be fond of anything. But these things come by nature not desire. Human love is not the growth of human will.

"Well, I have bought that horse! The four-year-old. My vet. says it's the best four-year-old he ever saw in his life and the owner offered me £5 to be off the bargain. I said my time was of more value than that and I would take a hundred!

"To-morrow I am going over to see a horse by 'Scene Shifter'—'Wedding Eve' called 'Fairy Scene' or some such stupid thing. I am going to call it 'Night Shift' if I buy it. Sir William Eden's 'Night Shift', first—will read well! It's an ugly brute but I believe it can go. I am going to see it over fences and if I buy it shall run it at Sedgefield and keep it on to hunt next year!

"Next Wednesday we go to town. On Friday you dine with us at Willis's at 7.30, please. I look forward to it. Saturday morning I take you to the Whistlers, Sunday I take you to St. Paul's Cathedral, Monday I take you to

see my water colours and the Fantins. After that I take no thought. Sufficient unto those days will be the pleasure thereof."

"Henry Boyle is much nicer than I am and for the moment there is for me no France and motor cars and blue eyes and curling blood-red lips! For the moment only, for *le jour viendra!* But as for you I'm sure and must emphasise it freely, you yourself are most unfit to go. *Don't* run the risk of being laid up at some out of the way inn with no doctor and no comforts. Put off the trip and stay in London and await events. I will come and see you!"

"Yes, life *is* weary, and disappointing. Nearly everything *just* misses. We find—we discover—we approach—but we don't realise! And what we get we take, but we care not for. What we *want* is not available. Of what use Soda-water when we want Champagne! It quenches but it does not please or satisfy."

"You have a nice mind and heart and a *comprehending sympathy* which combined make an excellent woman, but of course have a tendency to make you sad. It is not surroundings

but temperament that makes one sad. Every feeling, thinking person is sad. I am sad because I suffer torture from my imagination. 'How much pain the evils have caused us which have never happened.' I am nervous, '*surexcité*' as the French say. Very affectionate, I worry about my affection almost to pain. Then I am sanguine about everything, know how it should be, and want and—foolish thing—expect it to go right. But I promise not to drown myself without giving you notice.

"I feel so much is just missed in life. Success and joy seem to evade one like ice. Huxley says on the whole he thinks that life is worth living. I agree, in that there is so much that is beautiful and interesting among the débris of surrounding ugliness, of drink and tobacco and bad taste and bourgeois multitudes and, worse still, individuals.

"Yes, I agree. Sunshine has nothing to do with spirits, for me anyhow. It is *health*, the basis of it, and *thought* is a stumbling block. However let us 'live on' for 'hope steps in where reason should despair' and a sense of humour is a clause in favour of happiness. For a woman, you have a large lump. So cheer up!

“Will you come here, ‘expenses paid’, before I go abroad in May? Do come.”

And to his wife, on New Year’s Eve, he wrote: “Just a little line, love, loved by me”.

It was in his own home that Eden preferred to see his friends. Here he was king and could entertain them as he pleased. In the summer they must come to see the garden, to pretend to appreciate beauty in restraint, to smell sweet smells and to mark the improvements he had made in the grounds. In the winter there were shooting-parties.

These must be of the very best, the shooting and the food. The second-rate was always inadmissible. Either the best or nothing. Sooner than invite people to bad shooting he would not invite them at all. The idea of pottering about woods or moors with a gun would never occur to him. Many seem to think that a man is a true sportsman only when he finds his greatest delight in tramping all day for a widgeon, a brace of grouse, half a hare and a rabbit. But this was not his pleasure. Shooting, as everything else, must be on a grand scale, with plenty of birds but

high-flying—"Don't shoot low-flying birds" was a shout that often echoed down the line—with two guns and two men behind him, one to load and one to mark, with a host of *silent* beaters and with huge gamekeepers, chosen largely for their physique and appearance and dressed all alike in suits cut by his London tailor!

The days were worked out in detail beforehand with the head keeper, a large, handsome, gentlemanly, bearded, awe-inspiring Scot, whose serene dignity, spats and magnificent clothes set him on a plane apart not only from the ordinary run of bloody, grubby keepers, but from the guns whose embarrassing duty it was to tip him. This great man, as much a genius in his line as the baronet in his, was never excited, never noisy, never disturbed, and Heaven knows that with such a master he had reason enough to be all three! But not even his master was able to shake Mr. Smitton's dignified composure, and on the worst day recorded, when weather, dogs, drives, shooting, everything went wrong, the only reply to the shouts, the damning and the tumult was a stern, "I think we'd better-r-r be going home now, Sir William". And Sir William went.

But as a rule the day moved like clockwork,

the keepers, beaters, stops and the rest all on their p's and q's under the majestic control of their head, who with a nod here, a curt sentence there, set them eagerly about their business.

Poor Mr. Smitton! He lived to regret, though without lamentation, still with dignity and restraint, the good old days. He lived to suffer, though a faint sarcastic smile alone betrayed his suffering, the advent of syndicates with Rolls-Royces and cigars, to move about amongst these strangers as stately and as out-of-place as an old slow sailing-ship amongst up-to-date commercial craft. He lived to refashion the standing orders of ages, to arrange—he, who for forty years had sent down "swingers" over some of the best shots in England—to arrange fussy little drives all in the wrong direction, to stand by grimly and watch without a word while a "sitter" was banged in the tail or a hen pheasant blown to pieces at the end of a sportsman's gun. But now he is dead. Peace to the bones of this great gentleman, the best gamekeeper, the most faithful servant, the truest friend that any man could have, who was admired and respected even by poachers, whose tact kept the awkward farmer ever pleased and smiling, who could walk unper-

turbed with princes and peasants, who could control even the wild outbursts of his master, before whom little boys were proud to shoot their first cock-robin and not ashamed to weep at its death! He belonged to another age indeed. We shall not look upon his like again.

If Eden were shooting well, then all was rosy, smiles were on every face, chaff and good-humour waited at the cover side. On such a day it was an education and a pleasure to be with him; he was a delightful companion, a humorous, indulgent master, a joy to watch for the grace and quickness of his movements. An on-looker once counted thirty-eight pheasants to his gun out of a possible forty, all streaming from a tall beech wood on the slope of a hill, as high as one could wish to see them, and scarcely a wounded bird amongst the fallen. It was not lack of skill which prevented him from taking his place amongst the few crack shots in England, but the ease with which he was thrown off his balance. A bad beginning, tobacco smoke in his face on the way from one stand to another, a woman fidgeting behind him or getting in his way, a fumble by the loader, some innocent's unfortunate remark, a sneeze to make him jump

just as he was going to fire—each and any of these were enough to spoil his day, to set him missing and screaming and cursing, making himself and all around him miserable. “I’ll break these bloody guns!” he yelled one day, holding the offending weapon high above his head in both hands. “Don’t do that, Sir William,” called out his neighbour, greatly daring: “give them to me!”

Or, walking partridges, a dog breaks the line and dashes on ahead. “WHOSE DOG IS THAT?” Dead silence. The line halts. No one apparently owns such a dog. “Whose dog is that?” His gun flies to his shoulder. “I’ll shoot the beast, if someone does not tell me!” Then some unfortunate guest confesses to the ownership, a comparative stranger, perhaps, who had not learnt by experience that the one unforgivable sin was to bring an untrained dog out shooting with his host. For the rest of the day the animal is on a lead. “I have dogs enough of my own, thanks. I asked you to shoot, not your damned dog!”

Sir William’s estate was not situated in one of the famous partridge counties, and although one day he and only three other guns bagged 138 brace, all driven birds, it was on pheasants that

he chiefly relied for his sport. For these he had one big shoot a year, lasting three days, followed in January by a second shoot for the boys. Although he would have plenty of birds, he did not care for wholesale slaughter, and above all they must fly well. A cock pheasant sneaking out of a corner must be allowed to sneak. "Leave it! Leave it!" On one occasion, when shooting as a guest, he was so disgusted with the poor quality and the superabundant quantity of the sport provided that, in the middle of a drive, he handed his gun to his loader and ostentatiously folded his arms. On the other hand, he was quick to appreciate good entertainment and would express his appreciation in his own peculiar way.

"Thank you", he wrote to his host, after a very grand house-party of peers and princes. "Thank you for putting me in the best place at every drive, not so much because I had it, but because the others didn't!"

At home, from 150 to 200 brace a day was the average bag of pheasants, with a total of roughly 1600 head for the three days, and at every stand the host was careful to place himself to the best advantage. If, through some change of wind or unaccountable reason, the birds did not come

to him, he did not wait to watch them streaming over the heads of his friends, who were thoroughly enjoying themselves. Immediately he seized his shooting-stick and his shout was heard—"Higher up! Higher up!"—as with impatient movements of his hand he waved on the line of guns until he found himself in the desired position!

If a guest were missing birds more often than he should, he contented himself with a jest or even with words of sympathy, but if he were wounding instead of killing, or even killing in an ugly way, his host's caustic remarks were sure to increase the unhappy man's affliction. On the other hand, no one delighted more than he in seeing others shoot well. He would rarely move a good shot from his position, even at his own expense, and he would cry "Bravo, bravo!" and after the stand congratulate the man and make sure that he should be well placed for the rest of the day. There was never anything mean or envious in his disposition, but as he had to excess *le génie de l'admiration*, so he was intolerant of anything that fell short of the best. He could not bear to see things ill done, whether out shooting or anywhere else. And this was no affectation. It

was a positive pain to him. For this reason he never adopted the usual method in vogue to-day of giving each gun a number which changes automatically at every drive and thereby ensures that everyone shall get an equal share of the sport. This democratic system was abhorrent to him and he placed his guns according to their skill.

He made exceptions, however, for boys. To the young, when they were shooting with him, he was most merciful, and his children, who did not normally enjoy his company, were happy with him then. So long as they were careful to carry their guns safely—and of this they *had* to be careful!—and to take off the muffler which their mother had made them wear before he saw it, they had little to fear. When they were disgusted with themselves, he comforted them, and when they did better, no one was more delighted than he and he was loud in their praises before everybody.

When he had given up hunting, except for the hours when he was painting, his own shooting parties were his chief delight—at least in anticipation. He had not then to put up with the discomfort of other people's houses. He could choose the men he liked best, the pretty women

whom he most admired, and his only anxiety was the weather. It was maddening, infernal, but of course only to be expected, after careful fore-thought and arrangement, the house full of guests with nothing else to do, pheasants waiting in the woods, keepers and beaters all ready on their toes, to be kept indoors by a pouring day. "Oh God!" he exclaimed one morning, as he watched through the window the rain streaming from the sky, "Oh God! How like You!"

His friends enjoyed his parties too. Besides excellent shooting, they were sure to find with him comfort, good food and wine, fair women and brave men; and if they had to be more careful than in other people's houses, to be punctual to the minute, to confine their cigars to the billiard-room, out of sight and out of smell, to mind what they said and to keep their temper, sometimes, with bit and bridle, in return they had the unexpected surprises of an amusing and original character and they were certain of bringing away with them, besides the carnation for their buttonhole as they stepped into the carriage, something worth remembering and worth repeating.

"Do we shoot hens, Willie?" called out one

of the guns after he had reached his place in the line.

“Yes!” shouted back his host. “Shoot hens! Shoot everything! Shoot the Holy Ghost if He comes out!”

## THE GARDEN OF EDEN

"If anyone who resents my criticisms will honour me with a visit to Windlestone, Ferry Hill, in the County of Durham, where I have a certain amount of latitude and taste allowed to me to do as I like, I will show him what I can do and explain to him what I have done, by the grace of God and in spite of Mr. Lloyd George."

It is six o'clock in the morning. A dove in the sycamore outside the window gurgles in delicious satisfaction. A butterfly, mysteriously detached from its fellows on the wall-paper, flutters once and disappears into the pattern. A sheep bleats, a thrush pours out its song like a cascade, the triumphant light of summer bursts through the curtains, and William Eden awakes to another bloody day.

For a long time he lies and considers the hideousness of life; the treachery of friends, the frustration of endeavour, the futility, the hopelessness of it all.

Yet the birds seem to enjoy it. There they are, piping away, shrilling, trilling, screaming in ecstatic jubilation! And the water is winking and

flashing in the park, and the lambs are skipping, and all the rest of it. And people, too, will be glad this morning, all good Christians will rejoice, affected by the vulgar sunshine. And in the loud expression of their pleasure they will, as always, be offensive.

The merry, merry plough-boy  
Goes whistling o'er the lea;  
To those who don't like whistling  
What a nuisance he must be!

Then, leaving the aggressive gaiety of the human and animal creation, his thoughts pass on to his garden and settle there gratefully in a green and ordered quiet.

But even in the garden there is a disturbing factor—always a worm in the bud, a canker in the sweetest thought! If only one could have gardens without gardeners!

He rises and, putting on a sweater, marches down the long corridor to his punching-ball, his hair a-puff like a cockatoo's and a wild gleam in his eye. He has slept badly, agitated by hideous nightmares, and he feels ill. There will be trouble for somebody to-day. He returns to his room to find his valet putting out his clothes.

Woolger is more than a perfect servant. He is his master's confidant and familiar, a man with the expression of a wooden idol, an iron patience and a grim sense of humour.

“You didn't draw the curtains properly last night, Woolger.”

“I'm sorry, Sir William.”

“Not so sorry as I am. I've been awake since cock-crow, as a consequence. But of course you don't care a damn. Why should you? It wasn't you who was kept awake.”

“No, Sir William.”

“No, indeed! However, I like you, Woolger, and you very rarely do a stupid thing. Although a blackguard, you are one of the most intelligent people I know, which is saying much. And I believe you are loyal to me, in a way, more than my beastly family, at any rate. Not a word have I heard from my darling eldest son for over six weeks. Silly fool! Simply cutting his own throat.

... Go and send the little boys to me ... and understand that they have *got* to come. I don't care whether they are being washed or having lessons or saying their prayers. You are taking my *orders*.”

The little boys come. Meanwhile he has

dressed. "Little boys, would you like some strawberries?"

"Yes, please, Daddie."

"Come on, then."

They go into the garden, where with much to-do he finds them one strawberry each. Then he sends them away, to call them quickly back again and give them another strawberry to take to their governess.

He turns his attention to the head gardener, who has been hovering in the background. They go through the houses—orchids, gardenias—a whole house full of these—a purple lasiandra climbing against a grey wall, the cool mal-maisons, where he picks himself a button-hole, cherry-pie, verbena, sweet-scented geranium, and so out to the herbaceous border, his chief pride. He walks slowly, shoulders back, head high, constantly stopping to admire an effect. "But you can't see the beauty of that, of course! I shall never be able to teach you. One can never teach anybody anything."

In the border a small plant, flowerless as yet, is poking its head above the earth. He sees it at once and points at it with his stick. "What's this? I'm sure I never told you to put this in."

“Salvia, Sir William.”

“It may be salvia, but it’s not my salvia.”

“No, Sir William. There was a new kind recommended to me and I thought you might like to try it.”

“What colour is it?”

“I think it’s . . .”

“You *think*! Don’t you know?”

“Yes, Sir William. It’s red.”

“Red!” Sir William drops his voice to pronounce the word as if it were some awful mystery.

“Red!” He turns round to appeal for sympathy and, finding no one, looks up and takes the sky for confidant. “Red!” he says appalled to the passing clouds, “Red in a blue border!” And he turns at last to the gardener: “How long have you been with me, Wilson?”

“Two years, Sir William.”

“Two years! About a record, I should think. During the whole of that time have you ever seen a red flower in this border?”

“No, Sir William.”

“No. Do you know why? Because I don’t like red. Because I won’t have that bloody colour here. I would as soon have you! And I’ll put you there next time, I’ll bury you there myself,

if I see another red flower. Salvia Blue-beard. Do you understand? *Blue-beard*. So called, because it is *blue*! Take that thing out at once. You're a nice man, Wilson, and love your wife as you should and go to church and all that sort of thing, and *perhaps* you're the best gardener I have had, but you're certainly the biggest fool. However, one has to put up with knaves or fools in this world. Which do you like best? . . . Red! Good God!"

He goes into another house, to enjoy more scents and sweetness, but here . . . horror . . . what are these things in pots? **WHAT ARE THESE THINGS IN POTS?**

To us there may seem to be little wrong with them. We have seen better, perhaps. They appear to be somewhat stunted.

Somewhat stunted indeed! They are wretched, they are deformed, they are miserable. And these are the flowers from which he was hoping great things, to whose beauty he had been looking forward, which to-morrow he was expecting proudly to display to an admiring rival, these—these—these abortions! And they dare to shame him in his own greenhouse, to call themselves his flowers, to be second-rate, to be failures, to

be rubbish in *his* garden! This time words, even his words, are inadequate. He is silent. But his eyes pop out of his head, his cheeks are suffused with crimson, and he dances in delirium like a dervish. Then there is a yell and up goes his stick. Crash! With one sweep five flower-pots are sent flying off the stand. Crash, crash, crash! He waxes warm with the exercise. There were dozens of these flowers, row upon row of them, and petals and leaves and lumps of earth and fragments of pottery whizz and volley in all directions; till at last the stands are bare save for a confused litter, and he strides over the débris on the floor, out of breath, exhausted, spuffing and snorting, a purple devil of destruction, followed by a white-faced, trembling gardener.

This unfortunate incident delays him somewhat, so that he is late for breakfast, and late in consequence for the Bench; only a minute or two, but the court has begun. He is annoyed. They should have waited for him. A magistrate vacates the chair as he enters. "Now that you are here, I'll give it up", he says. "I should hope so", is the loud reply, and Eden settles down to deal out justice. He is by no means always on the side of the police, and he is very quick, allowing no

one, witnesses or solicitors, to waste the time of the court. With his presence the atmosphere becomes alive and electric and the cases occupy no more than half the time they take when he is absent.

“What’s the matter with this man?”

“Drunk and disorderly, your worship.”

“Anything to say?”

So-and-so and so-and-so.

“Guilty. Anything against him?”

“No, your worship.”

“Nothing at all?”

“Nothing.”

“Go, and sin no more!”

The men like him. They call him “The Bloody Baronet” and “Seven and Sixpence”, as this is a favourite fine; and the court, whenever he is likely to be present, is crowded with spectators, for he generally provides something unexpected, makes some amusing comment to lighten the tedium. A man came up to me in France, during the war. “I knew your father well”, he said proudly.

“Did you? When was that?”

“Oh, many a time have I been up before him! I was one of his bad boys. He used to give it me proper. But once they had me all wrong. He

spotted it quick enough, and the police got it in the neck, I can tell you. He didn't mind what he said. We would all rather have been tried by him than anyone. The best magistrate that ever sat on a bench!"

In spite of such scenes as that which occurred in the greenhouse, and which was by no means an isolated instance of its kind, his servants and employees were devoted to him. "What are you doing there, Webb?" asked one of the family. "Why are you working now? It's long past five o'clock."—"Ay," replied the old man, "it's past working time, I know. But this job's got to be finished. The master's coming back to-morrow and he'll be out first thing to look at this. I don't want him dancing one of his hornpipes round me", and he winked solemnly and went on with his work.

"It's not a valet that man wants," said Woolger one day, exasperated beyond all patience, "it's a keeper!"

But they knew that if he was fierce and unreasonable, he was also kind, open-handed and open-hearted; that as no scamping could escape his eye, nor his tongue, so he was as loudly appreciative when a man had done well. "Now look

at that!" he would say proudly to a visitor. "Could you have that better done by any of your swank shops in London? You see, he knows; he's an artist." Then he would give the man a sovereign, a suit out of his wardrobe, or send him away for a holiday, or whatever might occur to him at the moment. The secret of his workmen's affection for him, of their appreciation of his character, lay in his treatment of them. He behaved to them, not as a benevolent superior being to creatures on a different plane, but with the wildness, the brutality, even the injustice sometimes, of a man like themselves. He could enter into all their work and understand it. They could not for an instant deceive him, and he would put up with no sort of nonsense. But he sympathised with them and was generous to them, and joked with them and damned them and praised them, whole-heartedly, without *arrière-pensée* or embarrassment. The relationship between him and his employees was more Elizabethan than modern, certainly far removed from the impersonal correctness of the present age. He treated his servants as individuals with characters and minds of their own, not as machines. He was no more impossible with his

valet than with his wife, nor with his gardener than with his best friend. Some of these men were his best friends. He did not believe in “class or position or pedigree or rubbish of that sort”, and his opinion of “ladies and gentlemen” was not a high one.

“I haven’t been paid all my winnings yet”, he wrote. “It is very annoying. I may get them, but amateurs, *i.e.* ladies and gentlemen, *friends*, in fact, are never to be trusted. There are no honest people or ‘gentlemen’ (sic) in the upper classes, but you may find them amongst work people, and, occasionally, bourgeois.” And in another letter: “I have seen as good manners in a prize-fighter as in a pedagogue—and better; and best of all in a Highland gillie; worst of all in a Jack-in-office, in whatever country in Europe or America you prefer”.

The following charming and amusing letters to an old servant, who had retired and was now keeping a public-house, will go far towards explaining the affection and admiration in which he was held:

“WALKER—I enclose cuttings about my exhibition. Very favourable, but people won’t

buy. They spend their money on whiskey (bloody fools, dear Walker!), motors, polo, 'drunkenness, revelry and such like'. Hand on the cuttings to that 'Innocent Doctor'. Tell him to return them and that he is a lazy brute about writing.

"I feel better and am lighter. We must descend leisurely to the grave together, Walker, as rabid teetotallers. Meantime, nothing shall induce me to 'vote for women' except that they be put to bed quite comfortably whilst they are still young.

"Keep well and behave yourself."

"Delighted to give you permission to bring your 15 friends to Windlestone, whether I am there or not. You are lucky to have 15 friends—I wish I had 5."

The following letter was written from Bath, where Eden had made arrangements for a cure for his old friend:

"Everything will be ready for you on Wednesday. I have spoken to my Dr. McKenzie. I have told him you are an awful scoundrel, but

he consents to see you for my sake. I think it is doing me good, but old age and gout are bad to get rid of.

“Mr. Tomkinson met with a good end. I remember many a time riding by his side in Cheshire. He was very hard. You could not beat him unless he fell—which was often. He was too old for the game. It is better to accept one’s liabilities of old age and pot bellies when they come, as you and I do. But you will leave some of it in Bath.”

“I hope you will have a good Xmas without any whiskey or politicians. I hope too you are better, poor devil. They do persecute you. Never mind. You are the best sort that ever lived, about the only one left now, but if they were common they would have no value. Good luck, dear Walker.”

“Poor old Walker, give up that ‘bloody pub’. You were perfectly well last summer. Go back to your little ‘ouse by the railway and work in your garden and ride my pony about. Now do what I tell you—you are the best friend I have got and I can’t afford to lose you, and lose you I shall if you stay in that bloody

‘pub’. I know you only drink a teaspoonful of whiskey in the year but looking at it is the thing and smelling ‘of it’ is just as bad, so do what I tell you at once.

“I am here<sup>1</sup> alone, leading a strenuous, godly and sober life. I mean to ‘stick it out’ for the Glory of God, the payment of my debts and other reasons. It is very cold and the expenses of keeping the house warm are great. Otherwise Mr. Woolger and I live on next to nothing—a little macaroni and ‘grace before meat’ is all we want.

“Now do what I tell you, you — old fool, and get well before I come back.”

“Buck up, Walker!

“I am so glad you are better. We can’t spare you yet. We must both jump into the bottomless pit together.

“Yours affectionately,

“WILLIAM EDEN”

“Mr. Harris”, to whom the following letters are addressed, was Eden’s butler. His real name was House, but his master called him “Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Venice.

Harris" in imitation of the way in which the servants used to pronounce his name. The first letter is on the birth of a daughter.

*"To Mr. House.*

"DEAR SIR—You have been a long time thinking about it, but they say that everything comes to him who knows how to wait, and you know how to wait—for the Great Nativity anyhow. I congratulate you and am delighted.

"I suppose you think you have done a wonderful thing. But you really haven't, you know, and I can't forgive you if you do it again.

"I shall hope to hear that all is going well and shall look forward to seeing it soon and will tell you what I think of it.

"I don't care much for my valet.<sup>1</sup> He is not a bad servant, but he is a common, vulgar brute—not my class. I dreamt last night I had you by the throat on the best staircase because you did not tell me about him. Is this true, or was I dreaming?"

<sup>1</sup> Not Woolger. Woolger had probably been sacked, or had given notice, as frequently happened. But he always turned up again.

*“April 17th*

“There is no hurry about the pictures. Next week will do. Send some plover’s eggs to Mrs. Talbot, half-a-dozen or a dozen, accordingly. I shall be home Thursday by 10.35—two yellow cars.

“I am no better, rather worse. However, the ‘Lord is risen’, that is something, and He will have nothing to do now till Christmas.”

“*Mr. Harris.*

“DEAR SIR—Will you please look amongst the framed pictures that came from here and see if you can find two of Bath and send them up. One is of Queen’s Square, the other of a street in Bath with ‘Spratts’ advertisement.

“I have got a new valet and a new doctor, but I don’t believe in either—nor in God.”

*“December 21st*

“*To Mr. Harris.*

“DEAR SIR—Am glad the scarf arrived safely. It will anyhow do to ‘wrap a baby bunting in’—but not a new one, or I shall know that you are idling away your time.

“It is cold here,<sup>1</sup> much the same as at home.

<sup>1</sup> Venice.

The flat is 'all right'—*tin pot* of course, and the stairs are *awful* for me, worse than Waterloo Place, and I have no breath. But I am going to 'stick it out' as they say. It is *real* economy.

"I hope that you and yours are well and happy as usual—Smitton 'and family' and all—at this merry and greedy time of year, amidst 'glad tidings' etc."

The following note was drawn up to greet the butler on his return from a half-holiday:

"LIST OF GRIEVANCES FOR MR.  
HOUSE'S CONSIDERATION

Cold Soup.

Fish not done.

Mutton tough.

Cabbage cold.

Wild duck tough, cold and high.

---

Floor covered with bread and butter.

No toothpicks.

Dirty dishes.

No ice to the butter.

Small soda instead of large.

Small spoon instead of large for gravy.

*Sic transit gloria mundi.*

House to the rescue.

Amen.”

But we have left William Eden at the Bench and we must bring him home and continue the day with him.

After luncheon he sets out with his agent on a tour of inspection, to see the latest improvements to his property and to consider others. They stand together on the portico, at the top of the steps, contemplating the landscape before them, and while they are looking at the landscape we may as well look at them. If we have in our eye the picture of the man about whom we are reading, it helps us to a better understanding of him, for whatever may be said about judging by appearances, the look of a man is a clue to his character. “We are all more or less what we look like”, said Eden himself. “A stud groom, a fox-hound puppy, and an artist, we generally look the part—in fact a donkey looks like an ass!”

The baronet is the bigger of the two men. He is six feet high, he carries himself very straight

and he is proud of his figure. "Have just been measured at Adam's. I have lost 2 inches in the waist! Ask Beauchamp if he knows anyone at 60 who has better measurements than:

Chest	.	.	44
Waist	.	.	36
Weight	.	.	13 stone
Height	.	.	6 feet."

His cheeks are full-blooded, his eyes are light blue and choleric, his moustache and short beard are of a reddish brown, his eyebrows are tufted and imperious, and his nose is tilted aggressively forward like a weapon of offence. He wears a cap, pulled well over his forehead, below which his fair hair, fine as silk, puffs up at the sides. He is very particular of his clothes and his person, and the former—a grey velvet knickerbocker suit, a smoking-suit made out of silk pocket-handkerchiefs, and so on—are a source of secret amusement to his more conventional friends. To-day he is wearing his own material, designed by himself and specially woven for him. It is a small brown check, which he calls "The Eden Tartan", and he gives it as a mark of favour to his friends, and particularly to pretty women.

(Mr. Smitton, the head keeper, also wears it on state occasions.) Small spats over plain brown stockings, a stick in the hand, a deep mauve tie and a carnation to match, complete the picture.

Mr. Cradock, shorter, slighter, younger, good-looking and most beautifully dressed—"point-devise the very man"—looks sideways at his companion with a shrewd twinkle in his eye and strokes his clean-shaven chin. He is very quiet, a pretty shot, a fine lawn-tennis player, and a dry, amusing companion. They get on very well, although "Cradock thinks of nothing but lawn-tennis and his wife, a curious combination!"

For a moment they stand and take in the scene. It is the same house, the same park which, many years ago, Eden's father had viewed by moonlight. Now a balustrading sets off the house, like a frame to a picture, and half the great beeches near it have been cut down—"commend me to the 'vandal' with an axe"—while the remainder, cleared of underwood and rubbishy laurels, their lower branches removed, with room to grow and spread their canopy above, stand like strong columns, supporting with their bronze-grey trunks the greenness of a

wide and airy space. The grass beneath them, which in early spring is splashed with yellow aconites, where later clumps of daffodils wave their encouragement to the timid primrose, grows longer with the lengthening days and is scythed at last by figures moving slowly in and out of the sunlight which is filtered through the leaves. Elsewhere flowering shrubs are grouped, ribes and lilac and syringa; and on the lawn, cleared of an Indian colonel's deodar, a weeping ash stands alone, delicately brushing the ground with the tips of its fingers.

In the middle distance, over the park, dotted about the countryside in places carefully chosen to attract the eye, young plantations are growing, improvident and uncommercial mixtures of oak, ash, poplar and larch, each with its fringe of red willows, golden elder and dogwood, to give point to the advent of spring and of autumn. How happily and freshly in the morning light show these little clumps of trees! They enliven the landscape with a graceful surprise, as the last, deft touches of an artist give life to his picture.

Far away, on the horizon, over woods and undulating meadows, the uncertain blue of north-

ern summer skies mingles with the blue of the Yorkshire hills.

In everything which he planned and executed the consideration of Beauty and Order was ever in the forefront of Eden's mind. These, not the commercial prosperity of his estate, are the criterion by which he judges his improvements; it is these which are offended by a crowded tree, a badly laid hedge, a field that needs draining, or an ill-hung rickety gate. The advancement of Beauty and Order, of Beauty and Truth—"for Truth *is* Beauty, if realised"—this is the ideal to which, after his manner, and a strange manner maybe, William Eden dedicated his life.

For Beauty he hunted and hungered, abroad and at home; for Beauty he battled, without hope, in letters to the press; and to Beauty he was constantly giving expression, daily, not only with his brush, but with his purse and his axe and his spade.

And Truth was his mirror of conduct, which must never be clouded by humbug, sham, veneer, false sensibility, deceit and lies. Hence arose his hatred for religion, which seemed to him a canting hypocrisy blurring the stark but still

beautiful pains and realities of life. Hence arose his contempt for humanity, with its smiles which cheat and its words which deceive, with its pretence of religion, its high-sounding phrases, cloaking its vanity, cruelty and self-seeking. Such things as Missions to the Heathen, the Brotherhood of Man, Palaces of Peace at The Hague, lashed him into a fury. He was constantly speaking and writing against them and being abused for his pains by Radical idealists and “square-toed Nonconformists”.

“But where now”, he wrote in May 1914, prophetically, though his eye was on Ireland—“where now is the evidence of ‘the Peace of God which passeth all understanding’? What evidence is there of the influence of the Pharisee preacher? . . . And now I see the Home Office—‘Home, sweet Home’—won’t allow a black man to fight a white man, and yet a black man may marry a white woman, and ‘am I not a man and a brother?’ Ye gods! Ye hypocrites!”

“There is only one thing in life worth living,” he wrote to one of his sons, “and that is to run straight. Don’t, for God’s sake, ever play a double game or give people away who trust you. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the

truth. The Ananias problem is bound to be solved in the end. 'Be sure thy sins will find thee out.' " (In spite of his dislike for religion, it will have been noticed that his mind was full of its maxims and that he was fond of quoting them, for he had a remarkable memory and he was attracted by the dignity of the language.)

The destroyers of the beautiful were scarcely less wicked than the hypocrites.

"O for a holocaust of architects at the foot of the Victoria Memorial! Shades of the Italian Renaissance, ghosts of Adam and of Nash! Good-bye to the dear departed. To Hell with their deplorable successors! Is there any sorrow like unto this sorrow, that the progress of civilisation is the decay of taste!"

In the country at large, all efforts are useless. It is hopeless to attempt to influence the opinions of others. But at least in his own home he can do something to counteract the damnable, devastating tendencies of his day; and above all, in the garden. There are no royal flower-beds here, no scarlet geraniums, lobelia, lozenges, diamonds and variegated leaves. But here, where he comes at last, where he always comes, where he rests at the end of his walk with Cradock, on a garden

bench, his cap tilted over his eyes, run close-clipped grass and yews in gravely decent lines down to a fountain—Donatello's baby hugging a dolphin, swum about with goldfish—and up again to the softly tinted marble of Italian pillars and the blue haze of the herbaceous border. Glass-houses? Yes, one must have them, but out of sight. Move them from this side of the wall, where they wink in the sun with all the ostentation of a conservatory at Kew, to the other—and never mind the expense!—where no one may suspect their existence till he slips through a door (under the sprawling *putto*, there) into a warm sanctuary of delicious smells. And where the houses stood, put down more grass, and weather-stained grey statues in a line, broken at intervals with those tall poplars that grace the long white roads in France. Ceanothus on the wall, that soft dry powder blue against the deep and glossy green, and buddleias, sweet choisya, a dark and starry clematis: “and I have done this, Cradock, and nobody appreciates it, nobody notices it. People never look at anything, except themselves in the glass. That, of course, satisfies and pleases them. But I almost believe that you have got an eye, in spite of your lawn-tennis and

your Auction Bridge! I taught you, of course. . . . Bloody fools, my dear Cradock, they all are, with their blazings of offensive colours. Nothing more beautiful than a garden without flowers. I'll write to the *Saturday Review* about it."

But some flowers he must have, and a herbaceous border is the only way; so here it is, against another wall, covered this time with flowerless green creepers, for a sober background. And one colour suffices for the whole length and depth of the border, one key, blue, and its variations, its near related shades, of purple and mauve and grey. "But they can't see it," he exclaims in despair, "they can't see it! They must have their beastly mixtures, and the more they know about gardening, the worse their taste."

And so back to the house, pausing on the way, where, past the corner of a dark yew hedge, a last glimpse of the border can be seen. "I'll come and do that this evening", he says, and then, on the doorstep, as his agent is going, he suddenly breaks out: "My God, Cradock, isn't it awful to think of! All this that I have done, the trees, the grass, the flowers, all this beautiful place, second to none in England, what will become of it after my death? Thrown away, wasted, on a young man

with an eye-glass who thinks of nothing but hunting and polo ponies! And the others would be no better. Petticoat government has ruined them all. No appreciation, no eye, no desire for improvement! Loafing and idleness! And so this will decay, year after year, and no one mark or care about it one way or the other. . . . Then they expect me to believe in God and to love my neighbour as myself! Good-day!"

And William Eden goes to his study and writes his article for the *Saturday Review*.

#### GARDENS WITHOUT FLOWERS

"I have come to the conclusion that it is flowers that ruin a garden, at any rate many gardens. Flowers in a cottage garden, yes. Hollyhocks against a grey wall; orange lilies against a white one; white lilies against a mass of green; aubretia and arabis and thrift to edge your walks; delphiniums against a yew hedge, and lavender anywhere. But the delight in colour, as people say, in large gardens is the offensive thing: flowers combined with shrubs and trees! The gardens of the Riviera for instance; Cannes and the much-praised vulgar Monte Carlo—beds of begonias, cinerarias at

the foot of a palm, the terrible crimson rambler trailing around its trunk. I have never seen a garden of taste in France. Go to Italy, go to Tivoli, and then you will see what I mean by the beauty of a garden without flowers: yews, cypress, statues, steps, fountains—sombre, dignified, restful. And as every picture should have a bit of distance to let the eye out of it, here and there you get a peep at the hills. Distant beauty in a glimpse, given in a setting, a bit at a time. And you may add, if you like, a moving figure; ‘an Eve in this Eden of ruling grace’.

“Above this, as you look up, you recollect, is the Villa d’Este; classic—the garden and the architecture suited the one to the other. How I remember the noble stone pines in the Borghese at Rome, the sad and reticent cypress in the Boboli Gardens at Florence, round about the fountains! What depth and dignity of background! A place to wander in and be free.

“After all, the suitability of things is what is admirable. Are they ‘in value’, as artists say? The relation of tones correct? They do not swear? A woman suitably dressed, a man properly mounted, a picture well framed. People talk of colour; ‘I like a bit of colour

in this cold and gloomy climate', they say. Agreed; but what is colour and where? Titian was a colourist, but always low in tone. Put a yellow viola beside the brightest tints of Titian and you will see. Keep your effects subdued. Never mix reds or pinks and yellow; put yellow and orange and green and white together; put blues and mauves and greys together; and let your backgrounds be broad, neutral, plain. If you have a herbaceous border against a wall, let the creepers on that wall be without flowers or nearly so. Let the wall be the background to frame it. You would not hang a Tintoretto on a Gobelin tapestried wall.

"Have you ever been to Penshurst? There again is the beauty of a garden without flowers. It may have been accident, it may have been the time of year that made me like it so. There is an orchard and yew hedges and Irish yews and grass paths. And there is a tank with lovely pink brick edges and sides, and water lilies and fish; and it is surrounded by a yew hedge and grass paths, and its four corners have steps down to the wall, and a ball on each pedestal at its base. And the apple blossom peeps over the hedge, and the raw sienna

of the lichen everywhere on the stone gives the richness of gold: and that's all there is in the colour scheme. The only flowers I noticed were patches, unrestrained and unplanned, of auriculas, evidently from seed—all colours; many fringed with margins of gold, like the eyes of *la fille aux yeux d'or* in Balzac's novel. All else was richness, depth and calm, abstract but clearly felt.

“Against this of course there is the garden of the Manor House, the wealth and luxuriance that is the result of the soil that suits and the flowers that dwell so happily against the grey old walls. There you can scarce go wrong—campanulas, foxgloves, endless lists of things. Flagged courtyards, flagged paths, sun-dials—you know it all. And if you can find a place with a moat, a clump of yews and a king-fisher, stay there if you can.

“Never have flowers against a balustrade, only grass or gravel. Begonias, geraniums, calceolarias are hard to manage anywhere. Annuals are delightful, but their reign is short. Try nemophila called *discoidalis*, dull rather in colour, as they say, and like auriculas more or less. Linaria, too, you know, a very useful purple. It goes well with gypsophila.

“You must have noticed that many flowers most beautiful cut are impossible grown in beds. Carnations, for instance, roses, and sweet peas. You take your lady down to dinner. She is fond of flowers. She knows what she likes and she admires the decorations. They are certain to be either sweet peas and gypsophila or smilax and malmaisons. You try to make way amongst the smilax for her knick-knacks —her fan, her gloves, her scent, her powder puff, her matches and cigarettes. Eventually she puts half of them on her lap, and you have to get them from the floor after dinner—which you hate and she is more amused at your annoyance than grateful for your trouble. Such is her sense of humour and her manners.

“Fruit is the proper decoration for the dinner table, not flowers. I am sure the Greeks only had fruit. Orchardson in that picture of ‘The Young Duke’, I think it is, has fruit only in the wonderfully painted accessories of the dinner table. The Dukes are all alike, but the fruit and plate are not. But all fruit is not beautiful. Oranges and bananas, for instance, are not. Grapes, apples, pears and pineapples are. What is more beautiful than black grapes

with the bloom on them in a silver or gold dish?"

So he concludes, and is pleased with his letter. One of the best I have written, he thinks.

To some of us to-day, with our refined and artistic taste, with our herbaceous borders and severe furniture and everlasting Adam green walls, this article may seem a little obvious. We have learnt, the best of us, the art of grouping in our gardens, we no longer trail smilax all over the dinner table, we no longer pick things up for women who drop them, and we have heard of Matisse but not of Orchardson. But this was written in 1909, when exotic exuberance was still the rage, when every garden was a blaze of indiscriminate colour, when every house was a bower of flowers and fidget and every woman all frou-frou and scent. Perhaps those whom we now acclaim as pioneers of taste were not pioneers after all. Perhaps his precept and example, precepts then unheeded and examples unmarked, have, after all, served some purpose in their unrecognised influence on the disposal and arrangement of some of the most beautiful houses and gardens of to-day.

It is past tea-time now, when he lays down his pen; but there is never any tea for him. Why ruin your dinner for the sake of a hugger-mugger sloppy meal? Everybody must always be eating and drinking. If it isn't tea, it's a whisky and soda; if it isn't a sugary cake, it's a cigar.

The evening is lovely. The garden is inviting. He will go to it once more, to do that water-colour which he saw this afternoon.

Now at last there is peace. He is quiet and settled. His valet has brought out his paints, his stool and paraphernalia, and left him. There is no one in the garden. There is no one in the house to come and disturb him. He is alone. Delicious solitude! Even the flies have gone. There is nothing about him but the sobriety of dark yew hedges and the faint scent of the tobacco plant.

He paints. . . . This is going to be one of the best things he has done. . . . He paints, and as he paints even his thoughts cease to torment him. No longer stinging, irritating like gad-flies, they soothe him with subdued colours, they settle around him in the evening light, caress him with soft and subtle harmonies. He forgets himself.



“HE PAINTS . . .”



His ill health—he never feels well now, always living at a tremendous pressure, always fighting, suffering—is forgotten. His stupid gardener, Cradock's carelessness in felling the wrong tree—"The very one I told him to leave! Isn't it amazing!"—are forgotten. His business, the state of his affairs, for he knows that he has spent money like water—"but at least I have something to show for it!"—all this is forgotten. Even the faithlessness of his family, the "fierce ingratitude" of his children, the dishonesty, the humbug, the unreliability of all his so-called friends, all without exception—even these have faded away, unremembered into the shadows or dissolved into the light. He troubles no more about the purposeless anguish of existence. His disbelief in a future life, in the ultimate triumph of good, in God Himself, is lost, is consumed and obliterated by his belief in art.

Peace is in the garden, his garden, his own inviolate garden. It falls about his shoulders like a cloak. He paints, absorbed, serenely, unhurriedly, unconscious of the passing of time. The shadows lengthen. The sun disappears behind the high crest of beeches, leaving a scatter of little clouds behind it. They shift and break and trail away,

pink into mauve, into darkening blue. And when the yew hedge is black and the grass at his feet is wet with dew and the flowers of the border are ghosts in a mist . . . he is still painting . . . though his brush is laid aside and he is leaning forward with his hands on his knees. His sketch is propped against the edge of the fountain where the gold-fish now swim like shadows across a mirror.

A gate clicks in the distance and the crunch of approaching steps on the gravel warns him that it is time to go. He does not stir. With his eye, with his brain, with his heart, with every nerve in his body, he is painting.

## IN SEARCH OF PEACE

“Cross the water, rest in the harmony and greyness of Boulogne; pass on through Longpré, Amiens and Chantilly; delight in the poplars reflected in the stagnant water, the sombre, gentle, grey villages—and then you will cease to wonder why we produce a Leader and France a Corot and the rest.”

BUT Eden’s life is not all painting; it cannot all be painting. The valet who approaches to announce the hour of dinner brings at his heels a swarm of troubles, and the man who leaves the garden in the dusk is waking already, as if dragged from the depths of a dream, to the jagged realities, the petty vexations which he has not the strength to override, that hinder his high purpose and ever stand between him and the peace of full accomplishment.

A little wearily now, for he is growing old, he reaches the end of his day. He enters the house, and here, as in the garden, his eye rests approvingly on his surroundings. Here, as in the garden, he has made them, he is responsible for them. The Hepplewhite chairs in the dining-room in

the circle of the candlelight, the shadows that half reveal a little Sheraton sideboard and the dull gleam of Waterford glass, and through the windows, blue with approaching night, the dark, fan-shaped tree—how often has he painted that tree!—standing alone on a slope in the park. The deep chairs in his own room, the shaded lamps, the Queen Anne walnut, the Corots, the Fantins, and, above the Adam writing-table with its smoke-blue velvet top, the Degas, his chief delight and pride, those wonderful washerwomen leaning against the weight of their baskets in front of a yellow wall.

He is responsible for all. He has made it all, within and without. Why cannot these things bring him peace as well as the consolation of beauty? Why will they not let him rest? Why must he for ever be fighting, wandering, searching? But the night, which closes like a softly gloved hand on the weakening struggles of the world, brings him no peace. The soothing weight of darkness presses on his eyes in vain. He tosses in his bed from side to side, and falling at last to sleep, he calls out wildly in his dreams.

He must try elsewhere for peace. He must leave his home and hunt the highways and the

byways for it; though he knows well that he will never find it, that he is no sooner gone than he will wish himself back again.

And then he thinks in the morning light of all the practical difficulties, the expense and the discomfort of travelling, the smelly trains, the jostling people, the insolence of jacks-in-office, the motor-car which goes wrong or is driven at reckless speed, the paper walls in the hotel and the spitting Italian merchant next door, the torment of children when one tries to paint, and everywhere "the continual cawing of the clean-shaved American". But all these considerations are idle. He cannot stay at home. He must go. And so he sets out with bag and baggage, with some witty, well-read, agreeable companion who will be willing, in return for his expenses, to play the indispensable accompaniment on a harmonious fiddle, to be shown the subtle beauty in a grey day, to be reasoned with on the futility of life, and to listen in sympathetic agreement to the tale of friends that falter and relations that obstruct; and with the inevitable, perfect, much-sacked, ever-returning, criminal-visaged Woolger, to carry his paints and to brush his clothes and to remember the colchicum for his gout and

his switch against the flies, and to hear also, in his turn, the story of a faithless family and treacherous friends—" *Pas de danger!* I would cut her if I met her in Hell. And Woolger says he would cut her throat if he met her in Hyde Park."

And now, where to go?

Edinburgh, with its "hideous lassies" and its Scott Memorial, "early Victorian Gothic, like himself, his books and his Skye terriers—obvious and pedantic", with the danger, moreover, of running into "that disgusting Church Missionary Society here in earth", which was holding its meetings there on his last and only visit?

No, not Edinburgh again.

Bath, which is still beautiful in spite of its plate-glass windows and its "hush of still life and vulgarity" on Sundays? But Bath, which is rapidly losing its beauty, which has "put up a thing called the Empire Hotel, for all the world like a German sanatorium"?

No, not Bath this time.

Sussex, "with its red houses in rows under the custody of puzzle-monkeys; with its vulgar rhododendrons on guard amongst their dirty leaves, entirely out of value with the vitriol

green of verdant spring; with copper beeches coming into leaf and laburnums heaping up the score, and a border in the distance, perhaps, of mangy Scotch firs”? All this, to the bleatings of delighted lambs, may rejoice the heart of the “middle-aged Cabinet Minister, with a high hat in the rack and nothing else”, with whom he travelled down to Battle last year; but for him?

No, not Sussex.

The West of England? There is something to be said for that, with its whitewashed houses and “high banks clothed in foxgloves and campion and ragged robin and valerian”. But there are too many people playing golf: jolly, cheerful people, gladdened by the sunshine, eager to engage him in conversation, “which is what I like to avoid”.

The English lakes are beautiful in the rain, but they are too near home for a complete deliverance. And the food! And the beds!

The Isle of Wight is beastly and vulgar. “No Isle of White for me!”

And so he must cross the water, and at once there is relief to the eye. “Oh, the difference of French towns and French hotels to English! That vulgar, solid yet squalid Southampton,

with its hideous hotels and streets—and beautiful Havre. That wonderful quay with its grey houses, its delightful cafés neatly arranged for ‘the morning meal’!” And the farther south he goes, the greater his refreshment, the more insidious the temptations to linger, the more insistent the compulsion to paint. At Pau, for instance, near but not too near the Pyrenees—“Mountains respectfully distant and away, water meadows of green, willows of gold and red, poplars, straight roads”; at Aigues-Mortes, at Arles, at Avignon, places whose very names are full of promise, which never disappoint.

But he must go on, ever on. These places, alas! are not for him. Duty and friends, whom he needs after all, and possessions and circumstances and environment, yes, and inclination, too, will never permit him to halt, to stop here for ever, to throw all overboard and paint. He is reached in the heart of quiet grey villages by echoes from his northern home. He catches a glimpse of it at the end of the long straight roads. His thoughts turn to it as he sits sketching under a bridge. He remembers it even as he seizes his stick and chases furiously after a derisive gamin. He must go to Germany, he must take

the cure for which, ostensibly, he has come abroad, and then he must return.

But the cure is quickly rejected. One look at the place is enough. "Imagine a Schloss on a hill amongst mangy pine forests presided over by a German genius of fussy temperament. Imagine a sanatorium, a hydro in fact, without servants, food or comfort, but with bourgeois people, with doctors, nurses, and squalor and discomfort and *ugliness* all round! Imagine this and don't reproach me. I would have died of despair!" And then he thinks of the Italian lakes, of Cadenabbia and the beauty and the peace of it, and he flies to it for a refuge. The relief after that dreadful German place! The quiet, the relaxation to surroundings that do not jar, the bells across the water, the frogs! The frogs "are as delicious and promising as the cuckoo. Why does no one hate dogs and people, and love bells and frogs, as I do? People are odious—especially Americans. But, oh! the beauty of this lake. Why did God create a lake and atmosphere and people in the same breath? But I don't believe He did."

But he cannot stay long even here. There is some consolation for him in his surroundings, but no joy, and only momentary rest, even in the

beauty of still waters, even in the cypress shooting slick into the sky. He is never bored, wherever he may be; he is always observing and criticising, to his frequent pain and to his occasional relief. But peace is only with him for a deceptive moment or two, for beauty to the artist is not synonymous with peace. It is a yearning and a pain and a goad in the flank, ever urging him in the pursuit of an impalpable dream.

So where shall he go now? To Venice? No. Venice on a grey day, Venice in winter, with the fog swirling up the Grand Canal, with bare masts and the plaintive cry of the gondolier muffled in the mist, that is one thing; but with "that everlasting sunshine setting on the façade of the Salute", Venice is impossible. The Salute! "Especially made for young ladies to paint! Sickert, Sargent, Sunshine and the Salute have ruined Venice."—And the horror of that hotel, all gilt and gingerbread, the beau ideal of Italian palatial residence! . . . He can stand no more of foreigners and their ways, everything done to suit modern American taste. He must go home, where his eye is never offended, where the bourgeois with his pipe and his dog cannot follow him, where the only cawing to be heard is not

American, no worse than the harsh friendliness of a passing rook. He will go home. Perhaps he will never leave England again. As he rises and folds up his stool after his last sketch at Cadenabbia, as he looks once more over the lake and listens for the last time to those soft, entrancing bells, he realises that he is nearing the end of his journey. “This labourer’s task is nearly o’er. Does it seem waste?” He glances at the sketch in his hand. “Does it seem waste? Brabazon and I?”

He returns via Paris, staying long enough to paint a water-colour on the Place Vendôme—“where such a pretty girl paraded up and down in front of me, but she would *not* look my way”; to do another in the neighbourhood of the quays; to run the gauntlet of the Place de la Concorde, “rather like a tart in texture and pretension and very nearly as dangerous”, and to curse the memory of Haussmann, “who made those dreadful things called boulevards and avenues”.

But if Paris makes him swear, London fills him with rage and sorrow; the statues—the Duke of Wellington and other “angels on horseback, good at dinner but nowhere else”; the new front on Buckingham Palace; Bond Street, Pont Street,

Mount Street ("how truly he who mounts you swears!"); the "German sentries" at the two top corners of St. James's Street; the doom of Waterloo Place, the defacing of Regent's Circus, the hideous solidity of Holborn, the "ringlets" on the capitals of the Automobile Club in Pall Mall; "the reproach of the South Kensington Museum, the horror of Harrods' Stores and that worst of all disgusting objects, the Victoria Memorial!"

Yet London still has some beautiful buildings, as well as a charming approach "as you cross the Thames and look down on the wharves, the barges, the factories, and the other ins-and-outs which form the landscape". In St. James's Street, for instance, there is the example of Boodle's Club, and "though not so beautiful, still quite pleasant, Brooks's, Arthur's, the Devonshire and White's". There are some churches, too; St. Bartholomew, St. Etheldreda (though spoilt by a modern screen and organ), Westminster Cathedral and "the most beautiful Renaissance church in the world", St. Paul's. But none of these buildings, with the exception of Westminster Cathedral, are of modern construction. No building that is pulled down is

ever replaced by a better, and the more hideous the erections the more solidly built they are, the more apparently everlasting. "Nothing but an earthquake can ever make London beautiful again."

He dances round some new offence, some spick and span pretentious monstrosity, cursing and shaking his stick at it, vilifying at the top of his voice the Government, the County Council, whoever is responsible, wishing he could have the architect by the throat; and the people passing by move off the pavement to avoid him and look at him with amazement, a big, strange, picturesque figure, with top-hat, fluffed hair and purple cheeks, vicuna trousers and a plum tie in a careless bow. Then he strides on furiously, bursting his way through the throng, while his embarrassed companion, generally a woman, trots behind.

"And what are you going to do about it?" people ask. "Do!" he exclaims. "Do, indeed! What can a poor devil do to prevent mischief, or to encourage vice, even if armed with paving-stones of good intentions? Do, indeed! What is one able to do? The destruction of the beautiful is wicked and ugly, but the beautiful must go.

Things, like brooks that gurgle and women that obstruct, must take their course. 'Events control men, not men events', and these are events which are selected and approved, or perhaps not even noticed, offending no one but myself." He is right. There is nothing to be done. He would have laughed at a Society for the Preservation of Beauty, the difference of opinions leading nowhere, the "public spirit" prompting its labours, the playing to the gallery! The only hope lies in the impossible, in the appointment of an Autocrat for Art, with himself, for choice, as the autocrat. Meanwhile what he can do, he does. He writes his angry letters to the papers, he curses the fools who cannot see, and he consoles himself with the shreds of beauty still remaining, noting them, setting them down on paper, weaving them where he is able, in the little corner of England where he is dictator, into a symmetrical, concordant whole.

And there are compensations in being in London. If it were not for the street noises, the boys whistling, the motor-cars, he could live here quite happily. There are friends to see, one or two, in his own comfortable flat, an annexe of the Cavendish Hotel; to whom to show the

sketches he has done, by whom to be pleased with their intelligent appreciation—"Dear Thomson came yesterday and pronounced my latest as records and easily my best. So you see that old age cannot a prison make of my intelligence"; by whom to be annoyed with their failure to comprehend—"Dear Mrs. Eade out-did herself. I showed her Queen Anne's Gate. She said, 'Yes, that is charming. Paris!'—'Yes,' I replied, 'Queen Anne's Paris!' "

There are pretty women to entertain and chaff, there is a visit to his tailor to be measured, another to a picture gallery, dragging with him by the arm an unwilling victim, stopping for minutes on end in front of one picture, striding with snorts and exclamations past a hundred. "I am sick," he writes, apropos of some exhibition, "of your Reynolds's and Gainsboroughs and Lawrences and Romneys, with their chubby babies in ecstasy with themselves or with their mothers, or the long-drawn-out mother by herself with impossible figure against a ridiculous background of trees, and not too well drawn either, or painted, if we are to take the standard from the greatest men. Much fuss is made of the Cowper Raphael. I have seen the thing before

and I do not want it at all. I hope it will go to America and not set out on its return. Raphael is much overrated. He is best in his frescoes at the Vatican and his portraits of the Popes, and as for his 'Madonnas and Child', they can go hang. But let us turn and look, and let me try to possess, the St. Catherine of El Greco. There is colour, imagination, quality and feeling. It is meant for itself. There is no affectation that is born of the subject. Though a saint, of course, you do not feel it is religion, but it is art. This, the two Moros, the 'Boy on the Horse' by Isaac Oliver, the Zurbaran and the Hogarth, together with the Dutchmen and my own immaculate Degas—which, by the way, ought to be bought for the nation, not that anyone cares twopence for the nation—form, to my mind, the gems of the collection."

There are other forms of amusement, amusement that so rarely amuses. There may be a visit to the National Sporting Club, where he will have to pay five pounds for the pleasure of watching a fight which will not last as many minutes. It is bound to be disappointing, like everything else in life, but the boys would enjoy it. He will take one of them. Or better: he will arrange a



"*My own immaculate Degas.*"



fight in the dining-room of the Cavendish Hotel, not for the entertainment of "the swanks", but for the waiters and perhaps one or two friends. And so, after a little dinner, the tables are cleared away and he and the waiters are delighted with a real set-to, without those long and boring preliminaries of bandages and introductions which lead to nothing.

There may be a luncheon party at some house where he is appreciated. "Several people whom I like at last. Maud C. at the top of her voice announced me as the cleverest man in England—my family, as the most selfish brute. Perhaps I am both."

And there is that charming girl who may come and paint a model with him one day, in his room, "against the purple screen, from our own thoughts and uninterrupted suggestions, without pinafore pedantry or pose". Will she come? There is always the possibility.

But above all, there is St. Paul's, and there is Westminster Cathedral: not the Abbey—God forbid!—but those black pillars and those yellow pillars and the singing of the choir and the subdued light falling through the unstained glass on the wonderful red of the brick. There are signs

already, rumours in remote corners, that it is going to be spoilt, covered up with lavatory marble; but this is the inevitable way of Christianity, and of the Roman Catholic Church in particular, which often has beautiful buildings and always ruins them with a superfluity of glitter and trash. For the moment it is unspoilt, almost perfect, and for hours on end, day after day, he sits here, painting as he has never painted before. He tracks down the elusive light that haunts the aisles and chapels and slips up the polished sides of the columns, he strikes a sure and steady note in the blackness of a kneeling figure, he yields to the high aloofness all around him and catches in a glimpse, through the blue, thick, laden atmosphere, the distant and mysterious pageantry of the altar. He reaches now beyond, far beyond, mere accomplishment. The glow and splendour in his "corners" of country houses have been ordered here in a more solemn and more splendid measure—a catafalque instead of a screen, the majesty of funereal purple as the climax of a grand and sober scale.

And when he has finished his picture he pours his slops down the hot-water grating and leans back to listen to the singing boys.

The vergers all know him. In St. Paul's, in Westminster Cathedral, in Durham, in whatever church he paints, they give him a latitude which they would allow no one else. He makes it worth their while, but he knows how to win them with other ways than money, and apart from the fact that they like him, as he resolutely declines to accept a dismissal or a refusal, as he is perfectly determined to have his own way, it is difficult to know how to deal with him without causing an unseemly riot.

"Time to go now, Sir William. There's a service beginning. Nobody is allowed in here during a service."

"I am not going to move."

"I will give you five minutes, then. . . . Time, sir, now, if you please."

"I am not going to move."

"Come along, sir, or I shall have to fetch the Dean."

"You can fetch the Dean and the whole County Constabulary, but I am not going to move."

So he stays on and paints, and listens, perhaps, with half an ear to the congregation praising God; and as he listens and paints, he wonders to

think that there can be so many fools to come here and sing their hymn and never see the beauty of the building in which they sing it.

But meanwhile "great things are happening at Windles: house and gardens and woods and forests. I am off by the 2.20. I shall be alone. But no matter. I shall work, shall walk, shall shoot and paint, and hope to bring back something with the expression of beauty and sadness which I love."

So his wanderings are over. He has come back. He has realised yet again that peace can never be his in this world. He is back in the beauty which he has created, where nothing offends the eye, but still there is no rest. He cannot sleep. "I shall never sleep", he writes, "until . . ."

Look in yourself, say the saints and philosophers. In Cadiz and Verona, in Agra and Venice, wherever you may go, you will never find peace; nor in your garden, amongst your yews and statues, your salvias and lavender and delphiniums. Only in yourself.

"In myself!" he cries. "Exactly! You have hit the nail on the head. Happiness is *self-satisfaction*, and *self-satisfaction* is stupidity!"

“Where then am I to look? To religion? But I cannot believe in God, as we are taught. I cannot believe in immortality, as we are taught. And would I, even if I could, be religious? A thousand times no! A truthful conduct is the only thing that counts in life, and neither religion nor affection has any effect on conduct; only self-vanity. What does religion do for people unless to make them cocksure, vainglorious and self-satisfied? I would rather suffer, as I do, than be that. I would rather suffer with intelligence than be happy with a stupid complacency.

“Where next? To philosophy? Yes—the philosophy of disenchantment. For Schopenhauer is right, life is a terrible affliction, and if pessimism is not truth, then the well is bottomless. Nor can age and experience assist one and give one peace. As one gets older everything gets worse, and one becomes more critical, more observant and more sensitive to troubles. Only the obtuse and the unobservant can be happy. Most people notice nothing, or having noticed, don’t care. I like to criticise, I must care, and so I must take the consequences.

“No. I cannot believe in God. I can believe in no spirit apart from the body. But this I believe.

*There is* an interest, and an intelligence, and refinement, an emanation from some that we recognise, and it is a pity that it should be lost. It is not lost. In my case it has found expression, because it had to, in the water-colours I shall leave behind. Life is like music. *Sound* has no embodiment and that must die away, but the *music* remains, for the recreation of some fresh spirit, to enlighten the earth. *I shall die and disappear into the melting-pot. My soul* remains in paint and difficulty, a consolation to a few.

“But as for me now, nothing can make me happy, nothing can prevent me from suffering, neither God nor man, nor even woman! Art and beauty are the altars of sacrifice in my life, and I wish it so.”

Books serve but to confirm his own experience. Gibbon, Byron and the great biologist Huxley, these, his intellectual favourites, do not encourage optimism. To Keats he returns again and again, haunted by his loveliness. But there is no joy to him in his poetry. Everything that is beautiful is sad. A thing of beauty is a pain for ever, and “while pain is horrible, it is almost justified by its beauty”.

So there is nothing he can do but wait, and

meanwhile go on painting, planning and fighting, refusing to be beat, either by men or circumstances. His family oppose him, ignore him, thwart him. Well, the worse for them! He is not dead yet. He can still take them all on, knock them all down if necessary. That, after all, is the final answer to any argument. "Come outside and turn me out, as the Irishman said in the public-house. A fight to a finish is the Q.E.D. of life." In his imagination he multiplies his foes and their offences. He lies awake in the morning, while the cock continually crows—"no wonder Peter swore!"—and thinks of the quantity and the quality of his enemies. Their explanations are resented and their silences are misinterpreted.

If it were not for his saving grace of humour, we would grow weary of his recriminations. However much we may sympathise with the sufferings of one who was born to feel abnormally, we are tempted at moments to exclaim against the incessant and uncontrolled expression of his griefs and pains, indulged in for apparently so little cause. But we must remember that his ills were real enough, only too real, to him, that if he hollaed and yelled, at least he never whined,

and that his sense of humour and his spirited reactions kept him ever fresh and free from the taint of morbidness.

His quarrels are sometimes more amusing than unpleasant. The letter which follows refers to an incident at Boodle's Club.

Sir William Eden, unaware of a new rule that members must dine in evening dress, was dining in the club in day clothes when he was requested by a waiter, acting apparently under the instructions of a member of the committee, to leave the room, as he was improperly dressed. Unfortunately we have no record of the scene which must thereupon have taken place. We can only imagine it. But the ultimate result was that Eden resigned from the club.

*“Private, confidential and without prejudice.*

“DEAR COLONEL—Very many thanks for your letter. As you say, ‘the incident was a disagreeable one’ (disagreeable one, you should say, Colonel)—to be told by a waiter and, as it appeared, on the suggestion or instruction of a member of the committee to leave the dining-room as being improperly dressed, is an indignity that I do not care to put up with

again. I was not aware of the new rule or should not have exposed myself to your mercy.

“I have been thirty-five years or so a member of Boodle’s, and had I been in your place, I should have looked the other way, have sacked the waiter, and held my peace.

“But these things, dear Colonel, are a matter of taste—like evening clothes. After all, what *are* evening clothes? and who should wear them? That is a matter of taste and opinion. My own is certainly against that of Boodle’s Club, as now regulated.

“Fortunately, I am still a member of other clubs—the National Sporting, for instance, where the amiable President is resplendent, if I mistake not, in a black jumper jacket, a diamond stud, a black tie and a white waistcoat. Now this again is evening dress, but not according to my bad taste.

“But Bombardier Billy Wells does, I think, wear faultless evening dress, for I have seen him in my house. But then he too might fail to please at Boodle’s, for he doesn’t wear a yellow waistcoat which I notice is much affected by the committee at Boodle’s. Now I haven’t got a yellow waistcoat, so what am I to do? I *can* only resign and leave the club—for if I had

a yellow waistcoat I really could not wear it, even to please your refined and elegant waiter.

“Fortunately again, I have still other clubs—the Turf and Travellers’ to wit, and I cannot find that there are any similar regulations at these pot-houses, or any particular instructions as to how to dress.

“NO, thanks, dear Colonel; the decision is irrevocable. I must meet you with a *coup de chapeau* and wish you good-day, at the same time thanking *you* particularly and most sincerely, and the committee, members and head waiter to boot, for all their past and many kindnesses.”

But humour does not always predominate. In his dealings with his family there is more anger and more sorrow. He wishes to make friends of his children, but he does not know how to approach them. He has always fled from them in the holidays. Now, when they are older, he resents their avoidance of him. Now when he wants them, when he is lonely, he cannot get them. They fear him, his rages, his abuse of those nearest to them, the sad silences in his warm room after dinner, when the stir of a log

in the grate and the rustling of a newspaper make him jump and exclaim in nervous anger. They are bored with the lack of amusements in his company. They soon weary of the perpetual strain of artificial behaviour which seems necessary in his presence, the constant vigilance they must exert over their lightest words and deeds. They are too young to appreciate him, the harsh savour of his jests, his admiration and love for things which they take for granted or cannot see. And so his letters—“*You, remember, have got to come*”—are read with alarm, and every excuse is made to avoid going to him. Sometimes he insists, but rarely. He guesses their feelings. He knows himself to be out of touch with them. His friends are dead or slipping from him. He is often alone. He paints. He shoots a little. He still does some county business—“wasting my time at Quarter Sessions”. And he writes his letters, less amusing, more bitter now.

“See what one suffers for the love of beauty,” he writes, “and see how one goes on from one disenchantment to another!”

## THE LAST SHOT

“I am dead, but not buried. Therein a pleasure to come.”

So the end comes slowly and clouded with fierce, heart-felt and unnecessary quarrels. The most painful of these is with his eldest son, but no member of his family is free from offence. All, in his eyes, are conspiring and plotting against him, and he sees himself isolated, with his back to the wall, surrounded by treachery and deceit but determined to hold his own against everything and everybody, to make his enemies his footstool. “I don’t care now what happens when I die and they must take the consequences of the way I have been treated. I have been neglected, deserted, abused and thwarted. I have killed affection with kindness. It’s my belief they one and all wish me dead, but, failing that, to turn me out is the idea. In neither just yet shall they succeed. I wish I could be as heartless as they—but I can’t.”

He grows daily more unreasonable. Argument



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL  
(From a watercolour by Sir William Eden)



and remonstrance are useless. He will not tolerate contradiction or even a tactful and tentative disagreement. One must agree or be silent and go. He can see nothing but his own side to a question, which is not necessarily always wrong, but which even in its righteousness is far from the righteousness of peace. He alienates sympathy and blinds others to the elements of justice in his cause by the lurid and unpleasing light in which he bathes it. He is unforgiving, violent and implacable in his hostility. ‘I have a letter, from a ‘Lady-friend’ of course, hoping I will take the ‘big’ course and be friends with him. If I were as big as Goliath of Gath or as the late ‘Great Scott’ of Sackville fame, I should only be a fool if I did as she says. Besides I *can’t*, so there it is.’”

But he is right when he says that he cannot be heartless. He is unforgiving, not because he has no heart, but because his profound egotism and capacity for pain exaggerate what to another would be at worst a pardonable offence into an unforgivable crime. It is uncontrolled resentment against his suffering that makes him so savage. It is excess of feeling, albeit of the wrong kind, not the lack of it, that proves the obstacle

to any judicious arrangement. With less heart he would have had more reason and more justice on his side. A sensible parent would have found no cause for all these bitter quarrels, no difficulty in dealing with incidents and situations that made him miserable and mad. But if finally convinced that he had been badly treated, a normal man would have either forgiven the offence or wiped, or attempted to wipe, the offender from his memory. He could do neither. He attempted neither. He believed himself to be not only ill treated but abominably treated, treated as no parent had ever been before, but his only weapons of revenge or defence were the hopelessly inconsistent ones of unqualified abuse and almost pathetic appeal. "You have always been a beast to me, like the rest of my stupid family", and in the same breath, on the same sheet of paper, "I send you a few violets".

It is not surprising that his children, believing themselves to be in the right, after vainly attempting explanations which are only greeted with roars of unreasoning rage, should shrug their shoulders at last and go on their way with the remark that their father is an impossible old man. They are young; they have their interests,

their amusements, their affections, their life before them, in which he can take no part—he never has—he has never attempted to—with which he, with his ravings and his wild letters and his extraordinary clothes, can have no concern. He is out of their life.

But they are not out of his. Save for the one consolation of art, nothing can distract him from his grief. These are his children who have treated him with this vile ingratitude, and he has nothing to which to look forward. He can only sit and brood over his wrongs and fancied wrongs. He has nothing to which to look forward but inevitable decay. His glory is past, if it ever was. He is old and he is ill.

“I walked to the station, King’s Cross, and nearly missed the train. Had to run. Lord, how I wish I had tumbled down dead, for life to the sensitive is a great and terrible affliction.”

It is melancholy to speculate on the causes of the hopeless embitterment of a nature gifted with so many and so varied talents for success and endowed with virtues so princely, liberal and large. It is painful to contemplate the sad and lonely end of a man who rode forth in such

gay company, to the blowing of so many lordly trumpets. But now that it is over, or practically over, we may with some advantage briefly consider why it was that the life of William Eden, in comparison with its great possibilities for development, must be regarded as a failure.

We have heard now the noise of the tumult and the shouting, the ha, ha of horses, the yells of the wounded, but, as we hurry to the spot, we are surprised to see no signs of a pitched battle, no trophies, no breached walls, no broken battlements, no evidence of a combat of giants, nothing more remarkable than a torn banner or two and, witnessing some small skirmish, a bruised shield and a dented sword. What on earth has all the fuss been about! we are tempted to exclaim. What vengeance has this doughty champion, with all the weapons of war in his armoury, wreaked upon the enemies of his faith? What trophy has he wrested from the so well hated and rapacious grasp of Commerce and of Ugliness? What has William Eden to show, besides his scars, besides weariness and discouragement, as the result of his long, loud fight for Truth and Beauty? What remains in the end?

A garden whose blues and mauves will quickly

fade, a number of water-colours to hang, in their slight loveliness, ignored and unregarded, and a few forgotten letters in the *Saturday Review*.

Where is the masterpiece of art which we had the right to expect? Why has he failed to produce it? Why does his personality linger only in the memory of a few friends? Why did he not stamp it on an astonished world?

The explanation leaps to the mind of anyone who will not simply dismiss him as a spoilt child. It is this. He was a genius, but a genius uncontrolled.

His thoughts were original and creative, his feelings were profound, his expression was individual and true, his character was fearless, his habit of life was picturesque. It would seem, therefore, that every requisite of greatness was his and the power to impress it on the world. But the genius which sets its mark upon the world must do so, not only through impression, but through acceptance. Eden could impress, but he could never accept.

Great men, whatever they may think of the world, realise that they are of it and that they must work in it, with it and through it. If they are inspired and comforted by the stars, they

know the value, the absolute necessity, of an earthly light. If they are refreshed and refined by nectar and ambrosia, it is from the world that they must draw their basic nourishment of food and water. Their point of contact with life, the springboard of their greatness, lies in the common or garden but inescapable essence—the hopes, dreams, fears, loves and delusions—of the common or garden human heart.

It was here that Eden failed. He had no opinion of the human heart. He was out of touch with humanity. He could appreciate Byron, but Shakespeare was beyond him. Although he had many of the noble and extraordinary virtues which set a man above his fellows, he had few, if any, of those which raise him to the mean level. He had no sure foundation of everyday qualities on which to build his fine but fantastic architecture. The spirited arch and the stately column and the graceful pinnacle were there, but the body of the building—the commonplace, necessary living-rooms—was unsymmetrical, uninhabitable and wild. He could see deeply into truth with the eyes of an artist, but the more evident realities he completely failed to discern; his code of behaviour was

peculiarly strict, but he was a stranger to the elementary principles of conduct; he could learn lessons reserved for the elect, but he never mastered the A B C of life.

In spite of these grave defects, partly because of them, such a man might have made a magnificent despot in the sixteenth century. His quick appreciation and grasp of essentials in the conduct of public affairs, his self-reliance and swiftness of judgement, and his love and knowledge of art would have surely promoted the happiness of mankind and increased the beauty of the world, for his natural generosity and sympathy and his hatred of the vulgarity of riches would have saved him from mere tyrannical cruelty and greed. But in the democratic nineteenth century he was hopelessly out of place. To a mind whose only consolation is in the beautiful, whose sole activities are devoted to the promotion of the beautiful, whose chief sorrow is in the destruction of the beautiful, life in an age of commercial prosperity and progress, a progress realised at the expense of the beautiful, can be little easier than torture. Amongst shrewd, self-seeking, advertising brains the possessor of such a mind, for all its origin-

ality and intelligence, has no more chance of success than a child.

Like one of his own trees before he made room for its growth, William Eden was crowded out, smothered by a multitude of commonplace, successful mediocrities. He needed “the vandal with the axe”, either to give space for his development or to prune his own too natural and too wild luxuriance.

And so, while it is inevitable that we should sympathise with his sufferings, it is difficult, even in the clear light of after-knowledge, to see how they could have been avoided. We may well suppose in his place a man with but one more co-ordinating factor to add to his numerous talents. It is natural to associate with his imperious character a belief in the supreme power of the individual. But this was not his belief. For the dominant “I think, therefore I control”, the credo which we would expect from him, he substituted the surprisingly weak “I think, therefore I suffer”. There was a gaping chink in his armour. There was an insurmountable obstacle to improvement. “I am a fatalist”, he said. “Good-day!” In these circumstances no one can help. With such an attitude, however justified

by experience, however reasonable, there is no reasoning. One can only in turn reply, "Good-day!"

The spring of 1914, his last spring, still found him taking an interest in the improvement of his home. "I hope this weather will continue and let us get on with our planting and farming and garden. I like the spring, notwithstanding the singing of those noisy birds. I prefer frogs." Those noisy birds again! The unrestrained expression of ecstasy was always offensive to him, whether in the song of birds or in the conduct of men. Though he constantly gave way to anger and irritation, he never paid homage to sentimentalism. "Suppressed emotion", he wrote to his son (aged fourteen!), "is much more noble than enthusiasm, which is often mere hysterical gush. Mafeking! the *hoi polloi gushed*. The Nativity! the angels *gushed*. Gushing is feminine and unmanly.—DADDIE."

So in art, the pretty and the pathetic, the obvious and superficial inducements to emotion—nuns in a garden at eventide—were abhorrent to him, and the subjects of his own water-colours were selected with a thoughtful control and

painted, with richness and depth indeed, but with reticence and reserve. And in literature he advised, "If you do write a book, keep in mind the restrained descriptions of nature by Turgenev and shun the example of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*".

Laughter, another form of gush, was vulgar, indecent, and often falsely directed "at things which should be sacred with respect. I have heard 'a person'—I think it was a woman—laugh at a masterpiece by Degas. I have seen and heard others laugh at cruelty and suffering, and I have even heard of some who laugh in church!"

Sadness, sorrow, disappointment and love—it is these which make life beautiful, not when openly expressed, but when subconsciously and deeply and inevitably permeating the substance and the soul of a masterpiece, when communicated through the quality of paint or the mysterious coincidence of words and sounds, when prompted by quiet skies, or reflected in still waters, or suggested on grey days in the slant of a leafless tree.

But still he likes the spring, notwithstanding the birds, notwithstanding its "vitriol green"

and its lambs that gambol. He likes it, not for what it is, but for what it promises; the elusive cuckoo and the swallows, growth in the garden, the return of those blues and greys and mauves, warm days on which to sit out of doors and paint, with a switch at one's feet and a large handkerchief under one's hat to keep off those bloody flies!

But his illness, which has been creeping on him for years, now takes a firmer hold. The long walks round the estate in which he delighted are things of the past, those long walks with Cradock that were interspersed with so many pauses: to mark with triumphant eye and head thrown back the effect of an amusing story upon his companion, or to lean heavily upon his shoulder and point a stick with silent menace at a broken gate, or to emphasise some fresh evidence of human deceit, or to drink in quietly the composure of a winter's evening. And now—"I can just crawl round the garden from bench to bench".

But he can still paint, better than ever, and that is all that really matters. "I come up to town Thursday. If you want to paint, say so. If you don't, then you can go and paint alone or

otherwise, from bad Sickerts in dirty oils. How are you? I am dying."

So the summer passes. Every day his physical strength grows less. Past is the time when he could take on his family and knock them all down! Gone is that day when he waged a furious war on flower-pots! His pride in his physique is over. He ruffles no more down the long passage to the punching-ball. He even smokes!

And gone, long since gone, are the hunters and the coaching horses and the cricket matches and the boxing on the lawn. But the spirit is still there. If he cannot knock his family down, he has no intention of surrendering to them. "Not Heaven nor Hell, the devil nor all his angels, nor God in His infinite mercy, shall make me give in." And he still keeps his grip on the garden, and every morning, as before, he is out to control it, to bully, to harry, to approve and to condemn—but now from a bath-chair.

With one gardener wheeling, another walking by his side, and the wooden Woolger bringing up the rear, every morning the little procession wends its slow way through gardens and shrubberies, special paths having been cut through the bushes to circumvent the steps. And in the inter-

vals of examination and criticism, the invalid, with crimson cheeks and hair awry, tries to shock with some improper story the stolid Scotchman beside him, casting a wicked eye over his shoulder at his valet, to see if he is amused.

Of the war when it comes, as of everything before it, he takes an original view. It seems to him a ridiculous affair, and he chuckles at this evidence of peace and good-will amongst men. "We hear of nothing but those gallant Belgians," he writes, "but what of those poor devils of Germans mown down in thousands as they advance!" And his foresight is as keen as ever. "Don't you go giving your money to those damned refugees!" he says to the people on his estate. "We shall need every penny of it for ourselves." He tries to struggle to the local town to address the battalion of which he used to be colonel, before they leave for the Front. But the war did not belong to his age, scarcely to his life. He heard the world thundering and roaring past him, but his end was imminent, and through the quietness of approaching death the noise of the thunder reached his ears as a very little thing.

September comes, and partridges. He must shoot again, once more. He is pushed down the drive in his bath-chair and the birds are driven over him. He misses them. Two easy shots. There is a terrible scene. Rage and tears. "Take these guns, Woolger," he says at last to his valet. "Take them away. And never let me see them again!"

On October 1st he writes:

"Comparisons are odious, especially in my case, but I think I am much the same, or let us say—worse, which is better, for it suggests a change which requires new remedies. I now live on arrowroot, bread and milk, and morphia injections. The latter a delightful discovery I made for myself, and nurse said forty grains would surely kill me. Where am I to get forty grains—go and see!"

"The weather is wonderful and I am just able to paint at times. I see no change in the garden, but a great deal in the trees. The artist Connard has been to see me. He is delightful, but of course I cannot 'sit' and he is gone. My hour is not yet, but when it is, there is to be only Woolger and myself present—only two invited guests.

“I am sending to the Grosvenor. I have had more praise from Connard (*not fulsome*) than anyone else on earth!

“Yours affectionately,

“‘SIR WILLIAM’

“Foul paper, etc., you obstinate little pig!”

Less than three weeks later an old friend came down to him and broke the news that his eldest son had been killed in action. This was the son with whom he had quarrelled, whether rightly or wrongly, against whom he had said and written so many bitter and cruel things. It was the son, moreover, of whom he had most reason to be proud. Tall, charming, handsome, a favourite with all, he had already distinguished himself at Olympia and as a polo player, was already spoken of in the hunting-field as a rival to his father. But whatever Eden thought, he gave no sign. He gazed into the fire for a moment and then—“A fine death!” This is all that he said, and he never referred to the matter again. “Suppressed emotion is more noble than hysterical gush”, and “A fine death!” is a good enough epitaph, from any father, for any son.

It seemed that this autumn the warmth of

summer would never cease, and with the leaves fast falling about him the old man was pushed here and there, while the herbaceous border and the roses still lingered in all their loveliness, as if loth to leave him by whose command and for whose sake they bloomed. And the maple at the corner of the Chapel Garden turned pale gold and the fluff of the willow-weed was blown down the drive.

“What a day!” he exclaimed. “How much more beautiful is autumn than spring! I feel like doing a sketch to-day, Woolger. Fetch my things. . . . Now you can both leave me. Go back to your garden, Watson, and do some work. I suppose you would like to push me about for ever. Nice idle sort of existence for you, eh?”

So, alone in his bath-chair, he paints. And as before, as always when he paints, blessed oblivion descends upon him. He forgets everything—even the lonely bitterness of his heart, even the slow and painful process of his dying. He is only aware of the feathery softness of a clump of willows before him, and the pale slaty blue of the pond with the park stretching out beyond it, and the white swan, silent, aloof, slow, scarcely moving, dipping from time to time its long neck

into the water. He sees it and he feels it all, as he has never seen nor felt it before. He feels that he is painting his masterpiece. . . .

It is finished. It has not taken long. The day has lengthened but little. But he does not realise this. He has been deep into silence and it seems to him that he has sat there for an age. He is tired. With an effort he holds out the sketch at arm's-length, and his critical, choleric eye rests on it, ready to light up with joy in the recognition of accomplishment. . . . His sight is strained with looking and something seems to dance between him and the paper. He brushes his hand impatiently across his face. . . . Well? . . . The masterpiece? . . .

The colour is there, grey and yellow, ethereal, the colours of a dream; the vision of a spirit on the verge of eternity, the illusion of a brain half dazed with morphia. And the rest is—nothing. There is no form, no meaning. Only a few weak pencil scrawls; the purposeless scribbling of a little child.

Then the October stillness is abruptly broken and the swan is startled by a loud, wild cry. "My God! My God! I shall never paint again!"

The silence settles down as before; the swan,

as before, dips his long neck into the water; the brush rolls unheeded off the covers on the chair and is lost in the thick grass. William Eden sits and stares over the beautiful, indifferent park.

• • • • •

This was the end. He lingered on for another four months before he at last found rest, but his resistance now was over. He had written his last indignant letter, he had given his last order to his gardener, he had painted his last picture, he had fired his last shot. He had fought his fight for truth and beauty. He would plan and admire and criticise and quarrel no more.

“For now”—the quotation is written in his hand in a little notebook—“For now the incarnation of my destiny is nigh. The worm of the world hath eaten out my heart.”

## EPILOGUE IN SUMMER

THE garden in the following summer had never looked so well. Every flower had done its utmost and from end to end the herbaceous border surged like a blue sea. The air was laden with sweet smells, and the grave yews and statues, the pink Italian pillars of the pergola half covered with a mass of traveller's-joy, the little Venetian fountain which he had let into the brick wall at the end of the garden, the buddleia and ceanothus, the malmaisons waiting for their button-hole, the nectarines in the hot-house—all spoke of him who had planted and placed and grown them, all seemed to conspire together to do him a final honour. Almost, in the stillness, through the buzz of bees, one could hear again his triumphant, aggressive voice. “See what I have done! Isn't it beautiful? See what I have done in spite of everything—in spite of my family, my friends, the war, my sickness, my very death! What do you think of *that* for a bloody fool?”

But it was a final glory, the last song that this

garden, his garden, would ever sing. The collapse of beauty and dignity which he always dreaded, which he foresaw as inevitable, was coming more quickly than he had anticipated, and in more horrible form. His eldest son was dead; another was a prisoner; a third was getting ready for battle; the youngest, his Benjamin—“Can you swim? Can a duck swim?”—was soon to follow him, killed at sea, still a child.

He was a lucky man, a thousand times lucky, to die when he did. All the things which he detested, which had waved their ugly heads while he yet lived, grew rampant shortly after his death, lashed out with hideous tails, and slobbered all over the fair face of England.

American manners and American clothes, “jumper jackets” and all, bounced into London drawing-rooms. American shops and American cinemas and huge American blocks of flats kicked into dust the old and uncomplaining English houses and reared in the London streets their pretentious vulgarity, worse, far worse, than “the horror of Harrods’ stores”. At the spot where he once quietly sat his hunter, surrounded by his hounds and horsemen, his eye commanding all within its range, merchants in

motor-cars now shrieked and hooted by with reckless speed or met in the crash of death at the cross-roads. With government forms and government inspectors bureaucracy swaggered through the land, criticised private tastes, enquired into private purposes, seized private possessions for its own. Cabbages wilted and smelt all over his blue herbaceous border, tomatoes ousted his gardenias, the slovenly chrysanthemum expelled his fine-slipped orchids, scarlet flowers flaunted their insolence in the privacy of his garden, and Labour members and Nonconformists romped over his grave. Out of the ashes of the war, like some hysterical, chattering phoenix, sprung the League of Nations. What would he have said to the League of Nations!

Merciful death, that stopped his eyes and his ears to these horrors, the culminating expressions of his hated civilisation and progress! They would have driven him mad.

He died at the end of an age, at the dawn of another. He died, and all that he loved died with him. His blue garden in that summer of 1915 was singing more than the death of its master. With the droop of its bloom and blossom drooped and fell a régime, an order, a

manner of life. Death did not now mean for this place, as it had meant in the past, a mere change from master to master. It meant destruction as violent and as complete as the bursting of a volcano. . . .

And yet, on any night that summer, when the moon shone peacefully down upon the trees and the dull ochre mass of the building and the cattle sleeping in the rough grass, who could have guessed that any change had taken place? To a chance traveller halting for a moment under the fringe of trees at the end of the park, the silver gleam of water, the inky splashes of shadow, the crest of wind-torn beeches on the high and distant hill, would have looked much the same as they had looked over seventy years ago.

THE END

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